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HENRY WESTCOTT

A Memorial



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Henry Westcott.

"33"

THE L. E. ...
Church, ...
to ...
...
...
...
of heaven.

BOSTON

PRIVATELY PRINTED

1834

Henry

Westcott, Henry
HENRY WESTCOTT

A MEMORIAL

"What joy can be greater than being in a place where pure spirits are watching anxiously the progress of Christ's Church, and beholding with them the ripening of the fruit whose seed was sown by us while upon the earth, or the spreading of the rivers from the spring which we caused to gush from the rock! Will that not be a part of the pleasure of heaven?" — FROM MR. WESTCOTT'S SCRAP-BOOK.

BOSTON
PRIVATELY PRINTED
1884

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BOSTON.

Dedication.



*O thou who passed from out our view
At sunset's glorious evening hue
Into the purer light and air
Of the dear Father's love and care,
Come to us now while here we stay;
By these thy words help on our way;
Teach more the Father's love to know,
Thy chosen work while here below,
That we, with thee, e'en here may share
The peace and joy of heaven's own air.*

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INTRODUCTION.

To all those who knew and loved MR. WESTCOTT as minister and friend, and with whom he ever tried to walk into the nearer presence of the heavenly Father, this little book is offered, in the hope that it may help to preserve his memory, and carry on the work he loved so well.

MELROSE, Jan. 25, 1884.

A MEMORIAL SKETCH
OF THE
LIFE OF REV. HENRY WESTCOTT.

READ AT A MEETING OF THE ROUNDABOUT CLUB,
MELROSE,

By JOHN O. NORRIS.

MEMORIAL SKETCH.

WE are all disposed to recognize as true the familiar lines, —

“Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime;”

but is it not equally true that often the lives of some, whom the world has not enrolled among its great men, remind us that we may make our lives useful, if not sublime, by simply “doing with our might what our hands find to do”? Common men and women need the inspiration of good common lives, — lives of those of like situation with themselves, subject to the same limitations, solving the same problems, bearing the same burdens, and overcoming the same obstacles.

The sublimity of greatness may not be for them, but the worth of fidelity is within their

reach. The record of *one* such faithful soul gives us all a greater certainty that such a record may be ours, and cannot fail to be an encouragement and an inspiration.

The life of a simple minister of the gospel is not fruitful of striking events. It has none of the bewildering glory that gathers about the career of the great soldier, none of the brilliant renown that obscures and sometimes hides the character of the famous writer, none of the dazzling reputation that throws into a shadow the faults of a great statesman ; it has none, even, of that doubtful posthumous fame which the endowment of a university, or a magnificent bequest to some charity, sometimes lends to a life devoted to the base things of this world.

It is the simple record of one who maturely decides to put all these things forever away from him, and to devote his energies and his life to his fellow-men. His great object is their welfare ; and, to work for this, he is willing to banish glory, fame, renown, wealth.

He hears a voice, more penetrating than

theirs, saying, "The harvest is great, and the laborers are few." He recognizes the call of duty, and cannot resist. Obedience is his only happiness, his only rest.

In the presence of such a life, how all our petty ambitions, our childish ideals, our pygmy struggles for place and power, our devouring egotism and selfishness, dwindle to their true value! and we hasten to acknowledge that its ideal has been the true one, that its motives have been the noblest and purest, and that its service has been the most beneficial to man, and the most acceptable to God.

It is a reason for devout gratitude, that so many such lives stand as finger-posts along the pathway of humanity, indicating with no uncertainty the ways of truth and righteousness, and pointing upward from the misty vales of doubt, to the sunlit heights where faith forever dwells.

It is the record of *one* such life, that it is the privilege of this paper to present.

If "to be well-born" be the fundamental condition of a noble life, Mr. Westcott's certainly possessed it.

In Felt's "Annals of Salem," under date of March 12, 1638, is the statement: —

"They [the court] require a considerable number of persons to quit Massachusetts, who were Antinomians, and considered as occasioning religious difficulties. There were four such from Salem, — Francis Weston, Richard Waterman, Thomas Olney, and Stukely Westcoat. They resorted to the territory of Roger Williams."

A circular letter from the church in Dorchester to sister churches, written, in 1639, to acquaint them "with the names of such persons as have had the great censure passed upon them in this our church," puts into most prominence Roger Williams and his wife, John Thogmorton and his wife, and Stukely Wescot and his wife.

This Stukely Wescot became one of the founders of Warwick, R.I. And there the family name has remained, until the present generation.

The subject of this sketch was born in Apponaug, a part of the town of Warwick, on Oct. 30, 1831.

His father, Josiah Westcott, was the fifth in direct descent from the sturdy companion of Roger Williams,—Stukely Wescot; and in his mother's veins flowed the blood of Richard Waterman, of Thomas Olney, and of Roger Williams himself.

Fifty years ago Apponaug was a flourishing village, having a prosperous business and boasting of a bank; but the "march of trade" has left it behind, and now, like many New-England villages, it is but a dignified and respectable reminder of better days.

Mr. Josiah Westcott was cashier of the village bank, and naturally occupied a leading place in the town.

He was a constant attendant at the Baptist church,—though not a member,—an ardent temperance man, and one of the leaders of the great Washingtonian movement.

Although not a man of great education, yet he was a lover of books, and a man of more than ordinary intelligence and vigor of mind.

His wife was the daughter of a Quaker;

and this leaven of Quakerism, one may imagine, did not fail to work even amid the surrounding Calvinism.

In the son of these parents appeared the mental characteristics of the father, joined to the temperament and nature of his mother, — a happy union of manly earnestness with womanly tenderness and gentleness.

Of Mr. Westcott as a boy there is but little information to be had. Undoubtedly his life was like that of many boys of good parentage in a country village. One who knew him well from the age of thirteen thus speaks of him : —

“I lived in the house directly opposite to Henry’s home, and as a matter of course knew more of his habits and traits of character than most others in the village; and yet I know you will be disappointed when you see how small a space I shall occupy in speaking of him, . . . for the reason that his life was so even, so devoid of marked incidents. He was like the fruit upon the tree : after it is formed, it varies only in size until it matures and ripens. He was a remarkable boy. I never knew him to have a quarrel. He did not

spend his evenings around the stores and in the streets, as most boys do in a country village. . . . There was no mischief in him, and his temperament was so mild and even that he had but little taste for the exciting times and games that boys delight in."

At the age of fourteen or fifteen his fondness for study had already become manifest, and led him to enter the academy at Greenwich, R.I., to prepare for college.

While here, fortunately, he was still under the influence and guidance of the home,—as he returned home every Friday, and went back on the following Monday.

It is related incidentally that this plan enabled him to escape, what so many boys dread, the public declamation, and that he was not once called upon to "speak" during his whole term of study,—an omission doubtless not regretted by one of his retiring and diffident nature.

Here the youth passed two or three years as a student at an academy, living in a little world of his own. What pleasant memories

of such a life arise as the words slip from the pen! There the boy had his first experience of life away from home. He felt the new freedom and new responsibility of taking care of himself. He was one of a society of equals, in age and in many respects, and had an opportunity to measure himself with others.

It was a happy life, full of new-born hopes and aspirations, and of that awakening to a sense of power and ability which marks the beginning of many a noble career.

Here he pursued the usual studies required as a preparation for college, and entered Brown University at the age of eighteen.

In addition to this work, he gave considerable attention to the study of music, and learned to play both the flute and the organ "without any instruction." "When he was at home, a portion of the day was spent at the piano, both for instrumental and vocal practice. For a number of years he played the organ, and had charge of the choir, at the village church."

Although from the first Mr. Westcott's inclination had been toward a college education, yet his father had no particular desire that he should obtain one, and only consented when he found his son determined to go into business with an uncle in Cincinnati as an alternative.

As a college student he made excellent progress in his studies, because he made them the principal thing for that period of his life. Those who knew him agree in saying that he would undertake nothing else until the lessons assigned for any given day had been prepared. Not even his music could tempt him from his task, nor could the charms of society win him from his books too soon.

His favorite studies were literature and mathematics, and in the latter he excelled. He always considered himself fortunate in having come under the instruction and influence of Dr. Wayland, who was about closing his remarkable career as president of the university since 1827.

But his three years at "Brown" brought him under an influence more powerful in determining his future than that of Dr. Wayland. Dr. Hedge was then pastor of the Unitarian church in Providence; and Mr. Westcott's uncle Henry, a Unitarian of the old school, attended this church. As the young student resided with this uncle, it was natural that he should attend this church also.

Hitherto, he had been accustomed only to the views and preaching of the Baptist church. It is needless to say, that, from the first, the new church and the new pastor made a profound impression on his sensitive mind. As time went on, he became convinced that this was the true faith. With him, to be convinced was to act; and so, before graduating from college, he became a member of the Unitarian church. His Unitarian belief was a matter of deliberation and conviction, and not—like much of what is called religious belief—a mere blind acceptance of a few dogmas that have been

persistently made prominent from the cradle to mature years.

It had the consent of his reason and of his judgment; consequently he was always ready to speak strongly in its support or defence, but in no sectarian nor intolerant spirit. Dr. Hedge, speaking of the young man at this time, says, —

“I distinctly remember Mr. Westcott as a student in Brown University, and the satisfaction I felt in receiving him into the communion of my church, in Providence, at an age when young men, uninfluenced by external pressure, are not often moved to assume that relation. I recall the impression he gave me of purity of character and earnest aim in the conduct of life. That impression has been justified and deepened by all that I have known of his subsequent career.”

A lady friend writes of him thus: —

“I have not much distinct knowledge of his life before he entered Brown University, at which time we lived in the cottage adjacent to his father’s house. It was in his vacations that we saw him so frequently, and enjoyed him so much, and dis-

covered the germ of that character that ripened so nearly to perfection. We used to consider him singularly free from sectarianism, for one who was so decided in his own religious belief, and very courteous towards those who differed from him, as I can testify from experience."

After graduating, Mr. Westcott followed the business of engineering for a short time, until a dull season in railroad-building left him without employment.

Then he went to Cincinnati, and taught a private school for a year or two, when he received an appointment to a professorship of mathematics in a Western educational institution.

This brought definitely before him, for decision, the question of a vocation in life. For some time he had been meditating on the subject, but had been unable to make up his mind. He always spoke with deep gratitude of the aid and wise counsel given him in this matter by Dr. Livermore, who was at that time pastor of the Unitarian church in Cincinnati.

He used to say, that, one day in conversation with Dr. Livermore on this subject, the latter suddenly said to him, "Westcott, why don't you study to be a minister? I think you will make a good one." — "And this," he would add, "first set me to thinking strongly and earnestly of that profession." Dr. Livermore tells the story as follows, — as will be seen, rating his influence more modestly than his friend was accustomed to do : —

"While I was pastor of the Unitarian church in Cincinnati, I first met Mr. Westcott, who was on a visit of considerable length to his uncle, who lived in the city. One winter, especially, he often came to see me, and he attended our church very constantly. He was very modest in his bearing, as he was through life, rather reticent in speech, but underneath there was a solid moral substratum which argued character and a purpose of high aim. He was passing out of boyhood into young manhood, and what to do was the question. He was in the condition of hundreds and thousands, — bewildered somewhat by the very amplitude of the scope from which to choose, and anxious to choose well and make no mistake. In a word, for the

time he was drifting. But at bottom there was an earnest consciousness, not merely to select an agreeable and remunerative calling, but a useful and God-serving one, that would fill up the measure of moral and religious duty. While in this solvent and fluid state, easily impressed, it was natural that a very moderate shock or mild persuasion should crystallize his wavering thoughts into a fixed resolution. I did not, I am sure, as I never do, urge or entreat one to enter on the sacred office ; as that might, and probably would, leave regrets and misgivings afterwards in the mind. The most I did, or was conscious then of doing, or can recall now, was to be as a second self, or elder brother, to the youth, and help him work out the problem, so that the solution should be his more than mine, and so likely to be satisfactory and well grounded ever after.

“We had on this basis many long interviews together ; and yet, at the time while in Cincinnati, I do not think he had crossed the Rubicon. What was the sum of our talks and communings together came to a head not long after his return East. He then set himself resolutely to the work of preparation, and entered the calling which did so much for him, and for which he did so much noble and consecrated work.

"Slight causes work great changes in open-hearted, impressionable natures, and such was Mr. Westcott's.

"The gratitude he expressed for what encouragement was given him to enter the Christian service always seemed overweighted ; but I could only estimate it by his appreciation and standard, not mine."

Whether the decision was made before or after leaving Cincinnati, is of little consequence : it *was* made. He declined the professorship, and entered the Divinity School at Cambridge.

Here four more years were spent in study and in preparation for his chosen work. How these years were passed cannot be better described than in the language of a fellow-student : —

"He was a member of the class before my own ; but, by the concurrent judgment of his fellow-pupils, I knew him as a careful, painstaking, and industrious student. His tendency to ill health did not, as it sometimes seems to do, unfit him for earnest or serious work : on the contrary, it rather enforced the seclusion and retirement which his

scholarly habit required. With all this he was no recluse, withdrawing himself from his fellows, but sufficiently alive to the amenities of social intercourse, genial and kind. Were I to attempt indication of his intellectual taste and purpose, I should say, that, in an eminent degree, his aim was truth ; and that a severe accuracy, often unrelenting towards himself, even when he might well have pleaded exemption from labor on grounds of bodily indisposition, governed his methods and guided his pen.

“He was cautious and deliberative in thought, but not timid ; conservative, by instinct and wise training, of what he had determined to be good, but animated always by a liberal and progressive spirit. The critical faculty was strong and active with him. He was fond of the quiet search for principles deeply hid, and dearly loved to trace the distant springs in other lands and times, from which truth flows to vitalize and refresh the world. And the search was practical : the seeker was no mere theorist, dallying with ideas, but a man with a purpose, urgent with a sense of the need of truth, a Christian utilitarian, bent on finding and using the good.”

While at Cambridge, Mr. Westcott took

up a line of work in which he was intensely interested to the last,—work in the Sunday school.

For two years he was superintendent of the school connected with Dr. Newell's church, now Rev. Mr. Hall's.

This experience proved valuable in after-life, when he found it necessary to serve as superintendent of the Sunday schools in at least two of the parishes over which he was settled, and for a period covering the greater part of his ministry.

In 1860 Mr. Westcott was settled as minister of the Unitarian church in Barre, Mass. Here he remained five years, building up the church, reconciling and healing differences in the congregation, and doing hard work in the Sunday school.

At the end of the fourth year of his pastorate, he felt that he would like to change, and decided to resign, but was induced to defer his resignation for a year, by a letter from the children of the Sunday school, urging him not to leave them,—a well-de-

served tribute to his zealous labors in their behalf.

His work in the Sunday school was not restricted to the instruction of the Bible-class. He was fertile in plans for keeping pupils interested and awake. He liked to give general lessons to the school, and really enjoyed talking to the children. He was interested in getting up entertainments; and while he was at Barre the Sunday school, among other entertainments, gave an oratorio and two operettas, for which he was conductor, stage-manager, and even composer of the instrumental parts for the orchestra. All this requires an amount of work that only those who have had experience in such matters can estimate.

It should be mentioned in connection with this Barre pastorate, that on June 10, 1863, the pastor was married to Miss Sarah A. Read, daughter of Mr. William Read of Cambridge, — a lady who had been a member of Mr. Westcott's Cambridge Sunday school, and who fully participated in all his hopes and wishes to the last moment of his life.

In the twenty years of their married life, Mr. and Mrs. Westcott had three children, all of whom were born in Lexington; but only one survives, — William Read Westcott. Roger Atkins, the youngest, died in 1874, when but fifteen months old; and with that death came the first great sorrow to the home.

In 1882 Harry Tibbitts, the second son, an unusually bright and interesting boy of eleven years, was taken suddenly away by diphtheria. In Mr. Westcott's delicate health, this great grief was one from which he never recovered. All who knew him know what the father was in that home, and the intimate and beautiful relations he had with his boys; and, although he never doubted the heavenly Father's love, the loss of Harry's bright and sunny presence was indeed a heavy sorrow.

After leaving Barre, Mr. Westcott preached for a year at West Dedham, and was asked to settle there; but, in the mean time having received a call to Lexington, he gave the latter society the preference.

At Lexington he labored fourteen years,

the greater part of the time conducting two services every Sunday, besides superintending the Sunday school.

While he was there the church built a new vestry and parish parlor, and also repaired the church, expending about six thousand dollars, and, in addition to this, paid the church-debt of two thousand dollars. During the centennial season Mr. Westcott preached several notable sermons appropriate to the time, some of which were published; and he was chaplain of the day, on April 19, 1875.

In 1881 Mr. Westcott removed to Melrose, having been installed as pastor of the Unitarian societies in Malden and Melrose; and here the remainder of his work as a minister was performed. Though carried on for quite a portion of the time in bodily weakness, and under the shadow of a great sorrow, yet it was felt to be successful, both in drawing people to the church, and then in leading them to higher and holier living. Even now his memory rests upon us like a benediction, and its gentle and persuasive influence still

leads our hearts and minds in the way of all truth.

To those who knew Mr. Westcott, no account of him can be satisfactory that does not consider him as a man among men, and as a minister. As a man he was a willing worker in whatever seemed likely to promote the public good. He believed it his duty to be a good citizen, and to aid the cause of good government by his word and by his vote. He delighted to assist whatever seemed to him likely to improve the mental and moral nature of his fellow-citizens.

On this account he believed in organizations like our club, and availed himself of his privilege to join it, by enrolling himself at once, and was constant in his attendance thereafter. He had organized and assisted such a club in Lexington, and expressed to the writer his delight at finding one in Melrose already in a flourishing condition.

A public library was also to him an object of great interest. In Lexington he was the founder of a small semi-public library, owned

by shareholders, which finally became the nucleus of the public library.

When, through the influence of Mrs. Cary, the latter was established, Mr. Westcott became the president of the board of trustees, and continued in that position until he removed from the town. It was his duty to buy most of the books; and, as he bought none with which he was not familiar, this involved a great deal of labor. One acquainted with all this work says, "The town of Lexington owes Mr. Westcott its everlasting gratitude for his careful and conscientious work in its public library." Experts have pronounced it one of the best town libraries in New England.

As a man, in his social relations, Mr. Westcott was fortunate. He had a fund of information, a good command of language, an inborn love of the beautiful in nature or in art, and a remarkable appreciation and love for poetry, — all of which made him a most welcome guest and an entertaining host. But, whether guest or host, he was always a min-

ister; and as such we involuntarily think of him.

One of his oldest friends says, —

“He was a minister in and out of the pulpit. He loved his profession: his heart was in it. He never wore a badge, nor made proclamation of his calling, but, as with Henry Ware, it was always known.”

In the opinion of those who knew him best, especially of his brother ministers, his prominent traits were fidelity, sincerity, and a deep religious faith. His old friend, minister for many years in the adjoining town, in a discourse at the burial-service, made fidelity the distinguishing characteristic of Mr. Westcott's ministerial career. An older friend and associate in the ministry, a member of the council before which Mr. Westcott appeared prior to his ordination, insists on making sincerity very prominent.

His fidelity to duty was of that spontaneous character which makes it appear as something that was a part of his very life. It was not the result of deliberation, nor of an effort of

the will compelling action, but was the natural outcome of an habitual condition of mind.

"His sincerity was manifested at his ordination. This question was asked at the council: 'What do you consider to be the difference between a good Jew and a good Christian?' The answer was, 'I have never thought at all on that point, and should not wish to express an opinion hastily formed.' He was truthful to his own mind, and this developed on acquaintance.

"All felt that the ordination was a real consecration on the part of the new minister, and time strengthened that feeling. He was eminently religious, a man of true right-mindedness. The life of God in his soul was as his life-breath. The oft-repeated phrase in his devotions, 'Our heavenly Father,' was no 'vain repetition,' but the free utterance of an humble, loving child.

"He believed in immortality, but was reticent as to his intuitions of a future state, as he was of all things of which he could not speak with assurance; yet he doubted not that it was bright and glorious, that it would bring re-union, holier communings, higher knowledge, labor, and blessedness."

All felt the influence of his presence and acquaintance; and none knew him who did not say, "Behold a good man, one who walks in his integrity, and who hates all manner of darkness!"

His preaching was always interesting; because it was fresh, and dealt with topics on which the minds of the people were resting.

As an illustration, one has but to recall the series of sermons on the Bible, preached when the Andover contest made the new views concerning it a prominent topic of thought and discussion.

His sermons were timely, and consequently were more acceptable to his hearers than many abler discourses that deal with subjects more remote from the popular mind.

He had a catholic spirit, and this pervaded his preaching. He was always ready to examine new views, and was tolerant of opinions opposed to his own, if we except what is known as Calvinism, which he considered an inhuman system, and denounced with the utmost vigor.

His early training in science and in mathematics made him disposed to look favorably on the views of modern scientific thought, but in it all he found nothing to disturb his faith in God.

He believed in preaching just what he had faith in, and because he had faith in it. If he had doubts, he did not consider it wise to present them to his hearers, merely as doubts. If they ever became convictions, he did not hesitate.

A younger minister once said to him, "If a minister is doubtful on some points, don't you think that he must present his doubts in honesty to himself?"

"I don't believe the people care very much about listening to your doubts," was the reply. "It is better to give them what you feel sure about."

His preaching was acceptable because his sermons were new.

He disliked very much to preach a sermon many times without re-writing it. Sometimes when his friends urged him to refrain

from writing, he would answer, "No: I've something to say, and I must say it." He was never in despair as to what his sermon should be.

He was in the habit of making lists of subjects far in advance, and so could frequently make his study on one subject help another.

His industry and system supplied the lack of bodily vigor, and he consequently could do more work than many a more vigorous man; and he was always "beforehand with his work."

His sermon was always finished by Saturday night, and never came into the pulpit with the ink damp upon it.

But the man himself, speaking through the sermon not directly but indirectly, was the most important element in his preaching.

He was the "living word" in a sense that gave significance to the scripture phrase.

I have listened to those possessing greater gifts of oratory, greater felicity of expression, and more brilliancy of diction, but for a real stimulation to higher thinking, and to an at-

tempt at better living, I turn from many of these to the modest, unassuming utterances of Mr. Westcott, and there find satisfaction.

His work is finished, and well finished. He was faithful to the last, and was able to be in his accustomed place the Sunday before his death.

The year's work was ended, and he had begun to take a season of rest that all hoped would result in great benefit to him ; and, just at the threshold of that rest, the eternal gates swung softly open, and he entered upon the "rest that remaineth for the children of God."

In the drawer of his study-table, on the very top of his papers, and probably the last work of his pen, were found these lines of Whittier, copied on loose sheets of paper. They are full of the sweetness that filled his life, and express hopes and trusts which he fully expected to realize in the life for which he longed.

AT LAST.

When on my day of life the night is falling,
And in the winds from unsunned spaces blown
I hear far voices out of darkness calling
My feet to paths unknown, —

Thou who hast made my home of life so pleasant,
Leave not its tenant when its walls decay :
O Love divine, O Helper ever present,
Be thou my strength and stay !

Be near me when all else is from me drifting, —
Earth, sky, home's pictures, days of shade and shine,
And kindly faces to my own uplifting
The love which answers mine.

I have but thee, O Father ! Let thy Spirit
Be with me then to comfort and uphold.
No gate of pearl, no branch of palm, I merit,
Nor street of shining gold :

Suffice it if my good and ill unreckoned,
And both forgiven through thy abounding grace,
I find myself, by hands familiar, beckoned
Unto my fitting place, —

Some humble door among thy many mansions,
Some sheltering shade where sin and striving cease,
And flows forever through heaven's green expansions
The river of thy peace.

There, from the music round about me stealing,
I fain would learn the new and holy song,
And find at last, beneath thy trees of healing,
The life for which I long.

AT REST.

IN MEMORY OF REV. HENRY WESTCOTT OF MELROSE,

WHO DIED JULY 14, 1883.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for their works do follow them."

SERVANT of God, well done! Thy rest has come.
The work thou hadst to do, and didst so well,
Still in its silent influence lives to tell
How dear thou wast in many a heart and home
That now is shadowed by the general gloom.
Faithful in all things where thy duty lay,
Thou with the gentlest touch unlocked the heart,
And dropped thy teachings with the sweetest art,
And wrought according to thy strength and day
In thy own quiet and effective way.
The good thou didst may not be known of men:
The sower who in faith goes forth to sow
May not return to gather in again;
But He who giveth the increase will know.

HENRY H. CLARK.

In Memoriam

REV. HENRY WESTCOTT.

NOT slowly, down the steep of life,
With weary, feeble, faltering tread;
Not slowly, chilled by torpid age,
Made he the journey to the dead.

For on the threshold of his home
An angel stood at close of day:
"The Lord hath need of thee," he said,
And oped the gate of heaven straightway.

Prone in the arms of Death he fell,—
This we beheld, and nothing more:
O Faith! anoint our eyes to see
The angels that his soul upbore.

O hearts that ache! O eyes that weep!
Forbear your pain, forego your tears!
For, lo! between his home and yours
Lies but a mere hand's-breadth of years.

MARY A. LIVERMORE.

SERMONS.

I.

OBEDIENCE TO THE HEAVENLY VISION.

"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." — ACTS xxvi. 19.

THE conversion of the apostle Paul from Judaism to Christianity is represented in the New Testament as connected with certain outward phenomena, such as the appearance of a great light producing blindness in the apostle, and the sound of a voice. A great difference of opinion exists as to the nature of these phenomena, and the amount of influence which they exerted upon Paul,—whether the significance of the phenomena was the occasion of the change in the mind of Paul, or the internal change gave a significance to certain natural occurrences. One thing is certain; and that is, the change in the mind of Paul. What he knew of Christianity, and what were precisely his opinions concerning it before, we cannot ascertain. We know, however, that he started for Damascus with the design of persecuting the Christians, and that he

entered that city willing to hear and accept the truth from those whom he had come to persecute. Whatever happened outwardly, there certainly was a great light within his mind and heart, and a voice, the voice of Jesus, speaking to his inner ear. And it was to this vision, which consisted of a great light illuminating all his understanding, and a voice speaking to the silence of his listening heart, that Paul was not disobedient; and that this inner vision or revelation was the principal thing with Paul I think is true, because we find him sometimes speaking of this conversion, and omitting all mention of any outward phenomena. Writing to the Galatians, he said, "When it pleased God, who . . . called me by his grace, *to reveal his Son in me*, that I might preach him among the heathen" (Gal. i. 15, 16). And I cannot avoid thinking, that Paul had in his mind this same thought of his conversion, when he wrote to the Corinthians, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, *hath shined in our hearts*, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." All through the life of Paul, in his earnestness and enthusiasm in making Christianity known to others, he showed that the change had been within his heart, out of which are the issues

of life. Into that heart most truly God had shined, and in it had revealed his Son.

Something like that which happened to Paul happens to us all. Truth comes to us through a heavenly vision; and what our lives are, the kind of men and women that we are while we remain on earth, depends upon whether we are, or are not, obedient to this heavenly vision.

One of the prophets prophesied in the words of the Lord, saying, "It shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." On the day of Pentecost, Peter said that this prophecy had come to pass. And that truth comes to us through a vision, as the prophets believed, accords perfectly with the modern philosophical theory, that moral and spiritual truth comes to us, not through any process of reasoning, not by teaching, but through insight, — a looking upon or into, — or, according to the philosophical term, intuition. Moral and spiritual truth comes to us by an inner revelation. It is a revealing, — a re-veiling, a drawing back of a veil, — so that we can behold the truth, just as we behold any thing in a vision in the night. You can teach a child to repeat the Ten Commandments; but they

are nothing to him, they exert no influence upon his life, until he perceives the truth of the commandments within, — until a light within shows him, and a voice within tells him, that it is best to love God, to speak truly, and to covet not. And the same idea is contained in the form of speech, which is so common, that a truth flashes into, or breaks in upon, the mind. Christianity, or the religion which Jesus taught, becomes a reality to us, not simply when we have learned to repeat his words, but when the beauty and grandeur of its truth break in upon our minds and hearts; or when, as Paul says, "It pleased God . . . to reveal his Son in me."

Paul, when he perceived the vision which revealed to him the Saviour and the truth, was on his journey to Damascus, in the earnest pursuit of his work; which at that time was the persecution of Christians. So the vision of that truth which appears to men now, this inner revealing or uncovering of the truth of God, and this breaking or flashing in upon the mind of the beauty and glory of Christianity, often comes when men are earnestly engaged in the various pursuits of life. It is not, perhaps, in any opposition to Christianity that they are engaged, but neither is it in any thing with which Christianity is directly con-

cerned. The young man or the young woman may be engaged in the pursuit of pleasure, the man of mature years may be occupied with the pursuit of his business, or the woman may be engrossed in her various household cares, when, like a great light in the noon-day sky, there breaks in upon the mind such a revelation of the Saviour and of divine truth, and the inner ear hears words of such sweetness and authority, that the life is changed forever after. "As the lightning cometh out of the east," said Jesus, "and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." And so he comes to-day in the hearts of men, lighting up with a new beauty and glory the whole of life and character. Take the man who has been living, hitherto, not a criminal life, but merely a selfish life, whose sole thought has been to advance his own interests, and let him but once perceive something of the truth of Christianity, of his obligation to love and to serve God and his fellow-men,—let him feel something of the joy which must come from a life of purity, of truthfulness, of love, and of righteousness, or from a life of consecration to God and his fellow-men,—and the change is like a great light breaking in upon his life, and lighting up every part, showing him, in bold relief, the hideousness of

selfishness, and the beauty and glory of a life of love. It is as a light shining from one end of his character to the other. The man stands upon a new earth, and under new heavens. It is as a well of water springing up within him, in the desert of his selfish character, unto eternal life. Men have tried in various ways to describe this change; and although their language may seem to be only words of rapture, yet they have known that their words fell far short of the reality. Sometimes the change has been so great that it seemed as if there were some outward vision attending it. The Roman Catholic Ignatius Loyola believed that the Virgin Mary, with the infant Jesus in her arms, had appeared to him. Philip Doddridge relates an incident which happened to a Colonel Gardiner. He was once reading at night, when an unusual blaze of light fell on the book; and, lifting up his eyes, he apprehended that there was before him, as it were suspended in the air, a visible representation of the Lord Jesus on the cross, surrounded by a glory; and he was impressed as if a voice had addressed him. He was not sure whether it was before his bodily eyes, or in the mind; but he was certain that it was a vision. Such incidents show how deep an impression is made upon the

mind and heart when the Son of God is revealed within.

It is very true, that this vision which appears to the soul, this revelation of Christ within, does not always come in all its fulness at any one time. Occasionally, however, it does come thus, upon some sinful, worldly, or selfish heart, bursting with a full blaze of light and glory, making a man ashamed of all his past life, and consecrating him to a new and different life in the future; and in a very short time the whole character is changed, as from midnight to noonday.

But far more often this inner vision or revelation comes a little at a time. A man sees at first just a little of the beauty and glory of the Christian life,—of that life which Paul so well describes as being the fruit of the spirit of “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.” Little by little it breaks in upon his mind that Jesus is the ideal man of the human race; that to be a follower of him in his life of love to God and love to man is more than the possession of riches, or fame, or honors of any kind whatever, until, at last, the whole life, while not despising either riches, fame, or honor, is consecrated to the service of God and man. Such a change is not like that from midnight to

sudden noonday, but like the coming of the dawn. Here a ray shoots up, and now another, and then another and another, until at last the Sun of righteousness arises, and ever after it is eternal day.

We may never have had any such vision as was vouchsafed to the apostle, accompanied by any outward phenomena. *We* may never have had any such sudden revelation of Christ within the heart as was granted to Paul, and has been granted in all ages to but few; but have not the most of us had some partial vision of the truth, of the beauty and glory of the words and life of Jesus? Have there not been times when a ray of light has flashed in upon our minds and hearts, revealing the beauty and grandeur of some part of the Christian life? I believe that nearly all of us have had some such visions as these. It may have been on some sacred day of rest, when we were in the house of God, that some words which were read, or spoken, or sung, seemed to draw back the veil which had hung over our minds and hearts, and let in upon us some of the glory of the Sun of righteousness. It may have been in some evening hour, —

“When the voices of the night
Waked the better soul that slumbered,”

and gave us an opportunity to gaze upon some of the true and great realities of life. Or it may have been in a time of sorrow, when all the noises of earth seemed far off in the distance, that some light flashed in upon our minds and hearts, and we heard a voice saying to us, "Follow me." How many of us can say that we have not had some such experience as this? Do we not know that God has called each one of us, as truly as he ever called the apostle Paul? Has he not striven to reveal his Son in us? and could we be any more sure of it, even though a great light should surround our path, and a voice be heard speaking to us from the heavens? Have not all of us at some time, and have not some of us at many different times, felt an inner conviction that there is something in Christianity which claims our attention? that there is an authority in the words and life of Christ which we cannot neglect without being unjust both to our reason and to our feelings, — without being false to the light which we have seen, and to the voice which we have heard within?

Having had such a vision, by which we have been made to see and feel the authority and importance of the Christian life, the one great question of life must be, How have we received it?

Have we been, like Paul, obedient to the heavenly vision? or have we been disobedient? We know very well, from the light that we have received, that there is no question connected with our life that is of so much importance as this. If we have been disobedient to the heavenly vision, in all our serious thoughts concerning it we feel, not only that we have been remiss in a duty, but that we have been unfaithful and untrue to what is the highest and the best which God can reveal within us. If we were obedient to the first of these heavenly visions, we know that they came again and again, till our whole life was flooded with a divine light, and that we now experience a joy and peace and satisfaction in life, which no earthly dream of riches, fame, or honor could bestow. But if we were disobedient to the first of these heavenly visions, we know that they came less and less often; and perhaps now we feel that they will come no more, and we think it may be that we experience a certain kind of peace. But what kind of a peace is it? Is it not the peace of spiritual dulness and spiritual death? We have shut out the light of heaven, and have made, as we think, the soil of our hearts incapable of bearing any fruit of the Spirit. We have made our heaven as iron, and our earth as brass. We have

laid away our spiritual natures, our souls, in a tomb, and are content with the prospect of peace which lies before us. Nearly nineteen hundred years have passed since the birth of Christ, during which disciples, apostles, martyrs, and saints have borne witness to his truth. In this nineteenth century of Christianity, when the earth seems flooded with the light of divine truth, and on every side is heard the voice of the Holy Spirit, we rejoice, as did some people of old, in having eyes and seeing not, in having ears and hearing not.

At first our inattention to the heavenly vision scarcely seemed like disobedience. We were on a journey to some Damascus. We were eager in the pursuit of some object, and we imagined that we could not delay to ask the meaning of the light and the voice. If the vision came in the time of youth, we were in pursuit of pleasure. How could we pause in our search after what seemed then our highest good? And, for the first time, the vision faded, and the voice was still. If it came in early manhood, we were in the pursuit of riches, fame, or honors. How could we lose sight of these things long enough to ask the question which Paul asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" And again the vision faded, and the voice was still.

If it came later, when we had acquired riches, fame, or honors, how could we forego the enjoyment of these pleasures? and, alas! how little we then cared to seek an explanation of the vision! Once more the vision faded, and the voice was still. And so, perhaps, for a longer time the visions continued, and we had similar excuses to make, until the visions were gone, and perhaps forgotten, and God was crowded out of the heart. But what excuses are sufficient when God shines into our hearts and utters his voice? Any excuse when God calls is disobedience. There is only one way of avoiding disobedience; and that is by answering with Paul, "Who art thou, Lord?" and, "What wilt thou have me to do?"

And who can describe the difference which is made in our lives, according as we are obedient or disobedient unto the heavenly visions? It is just the difference which comes from having God present with us, or not present with us. For, although he is never absent from any one of his children, if we live unconscious of his presence it is just the same as if he were afar off. When we are conscious of his presence, and that he is directing our steps, our lives are filled with a divine light, joy, peace, and hope. But when we have shut out the heavenly visions, and are un-

conscious of the presence of God, then our lives are deprived of all true light, and of any abiding joy, peace, or hope. I know that some men who have shut out every vision of God, and closed their ears to his voice, will tell you that their lives are also bright, joyful, peaceful, and hopeful. And perhaps they think so. It is possible that a man may train himself, by shutting the sunlight out from his house, to believe that there is as much joy and pleasure in a dull, dreary, dismal day in November, as there is in one of the bright and glorious days of June or October. But those who are accustomed to the daylight and the sunlight cannot be converted to any such theory. And so they who live in the conscious presence of God, who try to be obedient to all heavenly visions, know that there is no light, peace, joy, and hope like theirs. Let us understand, then, that, by being disobedient to the heavenly visions, by shutting out the light and voice of God, we can make our lives dull and dark, so that all the beauty and glory which justly belong to a life on earth will be hidden from us; and that, by being obedient to the heavenly visions, by giving heed to the light and the voice of God, we may realize the true beauty and glory of this earthly life while we are here, and in the long hereafter it will be as a

bright and beautiful star resting above the horizon
of memory.

“Not always thus, with outward sign
Of light or voice from heaven,
The message of a truth divine,
The call of God, is given;
Awaking in the human heart
Love for the true and right,
Zeal for the Christian's ‘better part,’
Strength for the Christian's fight.

“Oh! then, if gleams of truth and light
Flash o'er thy waiting mind,
Unfolding to thy mental sight
The wants of human kind,
Though heralded with naught of fear,
Or outward sign or show,
Though only to the inward ear
It whispers soft and low;

“Though dropping, as the manna fell,
Unseen, yet from above,
Noiseless as dew-fall, heed it well,—
Thy Father's call of love.”

II.

GO UP HIGHER.

"Go up higher." — LUKE xiv. 10.

THE occasion is very well known on which these words were spoken by Jesus. Dining one day with one of the chief Pharisees, he noticed that many of the guests as they came in would select a place for reclining at the table, as far from the foot, and as near the head, as possible, their object being to get near the host, and in the most honorable position. Although it might seem an ungracious task, Jesus determined not to let the occasion pass unnoticed, and so spoke of its being a wiser plan to take a lower place, with the possibility of being asked to change it for one higher, rather than to take a higher place, with the possibility of being asked to take one lower. This was not a solitary instance that occurred in the presence of Jesus. Such conduct was a common occurrence, and, doubtless, had been observed by him many times before. A story is told of a king who invited a number of Persian officers to dinner,

and, among the other guests asked to meet them, was a certain rabbi. The rabbi on entering, it is said, seated himself at table between the king and the queen. Being asked the reason for such a presumptuous intrusion, he replied that it was written in the Book of Jesus Ben Sirach, "Exalt wisdom, and she shall exalt thee, and shall make thee sit among princes." It seems only a mere prudential maxim that Jesus uttered : but probably he would not have spoken, had he not known that the outward conduct of those guests was only an illustration of their inner life ; and, so far as that life is concerned, it is not a prudential maxim, but a fundamental principle, that, "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." No one who has any real conception of the religious life can doubt that the result of true humility is exaltation. Every truly humble soul hears, at some time, the voice of God, saying to it, "Go up higher."

But there is another way in which these same words are heard ; and that is, not as a reward, but as an incentive. "Go up higher," in one way, expresses the spirit of all true religious life, of all true life by whatever name it may be called. The mechanic, the artist, the scholar, all hear them ; and their only true life consists in obeying them.

If the Christian life is found in following Christ, then it must be a continual going up higher, and principally for the sake of being higher. But we ought to hear and heed these words, "Go up higher," not only for the sake of attaining some height which we wish to gain, but for the sake of avoiding evil. There are certain forms of evil which it is the best policy not to oppose directly, but to "go up higher," and stand above them, and let them flow harmlessly beneath us. The evil may be without, it may be within; yet the best way to overcome it is to leave it below, and go up to something higher and better. It is such a going up higher that I wish to commend, as being something that nearly every one of us can turn to some practical advantage.

This principle applies almost universally, from the lowest forms of life up to the highest. A city missionary goes into a street which is filled with a drunken, brawling, and quarrelling set of people; and he finds there one family, already capable of living a different kind of life. Does he advise that family to remain right there in that street, surrounded by all those evil influences, and try to resist and overcome them in that very place? He does nothing of the kind. He sees that the very first condition of their reformation is to get

away from those evil influences ; and he probably finds for them another house, in an entirely different neighborhood. What he does is to aid them to go up higher in their material condition, as the very first requisite for their moral improvement. And it is almost useless to preach to any class of people, in a similar condition, against sin, unless we help them to go up higher in their outward condition, unless we help them to gain a foothold above the miserable surroundings of their daily life. The gospel, considered only as a source of moral and religious enlightenment, will have very little effect upon a tribe of African savages if no attempt is made to lift them out of their barbarism. There is but little hope of improving the Indian morally, until he can be induced to go up to a higher form of physical life than is possible so long as hunting is his only means of subsistence. To say nothing about the higher use of Sunday, there is no doubt that it exerts a great amount of good among certain classes of people, by alluring them, even for a day, to greater cleanliness and a higher mode of life. The trade which a criminal learns in prison opens to him a higher form of life than his previous idleness, and enables him to forget the lower tendencies of his nature. If such things as these, —

the improvement of men's outward condition, and the lifting them up to a higher state of material life, — seem unworthy of religion, I need only answer by referring to the test by which Jesus said his disciples should be tried, which was not by the amount of praying and exhortation that was accomplished, but by the way in which they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and visited those who were sick and in prison. Jesus did not mean that such works as these constituted the whole of religion ; but he certainly meant that such works should not be neglected, especially when they might lead to higher moral and spiritual life.

The same principle holds true in the intellectual life. Scholars are made dissatisfied with a low stage of intellectual life, by inducing them day after day to go up to something higher ; and the same plan ought to be pursued after school-days are over. If our children have no taste for any reading except for the weakest kind of novels, it will do but little good to declaim against that kind of literature. Let us try to interest them in something better, and help them to a higher class of literature, and we shall soon find that the weaker kinds are neglected and outgrown. What is needed is a cultivation of something better, a persuading them to go up higher in the intellect-

ual life ; and these things will be neglected just as thoroughly as childish plays. And the same command to go up higher in the intellectual life ought to be heeded by us all. No matter what our present attainments may be, let us not pause until we can read and enjoy the very best things in the English language, — such works as those of Tennyson, Emerson, Shakspeare, and Milton. But it is when we come to the moral and religious life that we find the greatest results from applying the principle of overcoming or escaping evil by rising into a higher life. Often it is that we allow ourselves to be worried and troubled by something in the world, or we struggle and fight against some evil within us, when we could be free from every thing of the kind, should we only go up higher, where these things would cease to annoy. “Christian greatness of soul,” as the German Zschokke says, “is found in the follower of Jesus, who feels himself elevated above the plots and machinations and passions of common life. He is raised above offences and enmities : his revenge is to forgive and forget. He is elevated above the petty objects of ordinary men, whose highest endeavors are directed towards, and whose greatest happiness consists in, the attainment of some worldly advantage, some sen-

suous enjoyment. He is elevated above selfishness and self-seeking." "The soul," says Emerson, "looketh steadily forwards, creating worlds before her, leaving worlds behind. The soul's advances are not made by gradation, such as can be represented by motion in a straight line, but rather by ascension of state, such as can be represented by metamorphosis,—from the egg to the worm, from the worm to the fly." The words of the Christian writer might seem fanciful, and perhaps egotistical in their personality; but his thought is the same as that which we find in Emerson, in the form of philosophy. All true life of the soul, call it Christian or philosophical, consists in ascension, a going up higher, leaving behind former states, and other souls that have not the same life.

There is a state of mind into which we are liable to fall, and out of which it is almost impossible to extricate ourselves, unless we go above it; and that is, when comparatively unimportant things in other people seem to annoy us, and deprive us of real Christian feeling toward them. There is a great difference in minds; and people with different minds must be expected to have different opinions concerning the same things, and to act differently in regard to the same ques-

tions. We ought to have sufficient philosophy to understand and expect this, and, when we are not involved in doing any thing which we think sinful, to let it pass without being troubled by it. But is it not true that we sometimes work ourselves into a very unchristian state of mind, merely on account of this inevitable difference of opinion? Because things are not done just as we would like to have them, we keep ourselves aloof, and will not render any help; or, if we render any, it is done with any thing but a kindly spirit, and we work ourselves into a very unchristian state of mind toward our fellow-beings, because they do not think as we do. This may seem a very little thing to speak of, and in one sense it is little; but just there the evil lies, that we can allow such little things to so annoy us, and to create within us a state of mind which is so thoroughly unchristian. Now, if we wait for the possibility of everybody coming to think just as we do, we shall wait forever in vain. The remedy must be applied to ourselves. We must go up into some higher life, where such things will not annoy us. If our own lives only had more earnestness and enthusiasm of purpose, we should not be affected in the way I have described. A soldier who is earnestly engaged in a battle does

not notice a slight wound. A Christian scholar, when his fine library was in flames, only thanked God that it was not a poor man's house. And the same thing is true of life as a whole, as well as of certain moments of life, — the amount of annoyance that we receive from little things depends in a great measure upon ourselves. If we are thus annoyed, let us go up into higher life, go up above our self-nature. Let us make our own lives more earnest; and the little things which have annoyed us in the past will be deprived of all their power.

Another thing which obeying this command will remedy to a great extent is the strife and contention which sometimes prevail among men. One prominent cause of this is the absence of the higher forms of life. From a little book called "A Living Faith," I copied some time ago a few words which seemed to me very true. "It is the lower faculties that set mankind at variance. It is selfishness and envy and pride that drive men into hatreds and fightings. Just as the higher elements of manhood are developed, do men come into mutual harmony." The higher, therefore, we go in life, the more real and earnest our life-purpose is, the less probability is there that we shall give or take offence. A person who

is living a true Christian life, according to the writer whom I have mentioned before, "is raised above offences and enmities. His revenge is to forgive and forget." There was good philosophy in the words of some one who said, "A gentleman *will not* insult me, and he who is not a gentleman *can not* insult me. If that is philosophy, Christianity is, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." And is it not true, that, if a *man* injures us, he must do it through ignorance, or at some time when he is not really himself? Let us raise our own ideal of manhood, and then live in it, and strife and contention will be very perceptibly decreased.

And so, when any evil besets us, and becomes a hinderance to our true life, oftentimes instead of opposing it directly, we shall best escape its influence by going up to some higher life, and leaving the evil to die of neglect. If we think of the best Christian men and women, we shall realize that they expelled the evil from their lives far more by living in the higher life of the soul than by battling directly with the evil. It was so with Channing, Mary Ware, and F. W. Robertson.

And there is yet another time when we ought to remember to apply this principle, and that is in the time of sorrow. It must seem an ungra-

cious task to say to any one in sorrow, "Go up higher;" yet if we can only remember to say it to ourselves when the cloud of sorrow surrounds us, we shall find, not that it is a cure for sorrow, but an alleviation. Go up higher, let us say in sorrow, into that life where we realize that those who have gone, and those who remain, form but one communion; where we realize that there is no such thing as death; where we realize that the spiritual world is very near our own; where we understand that there is no "this life" and the "other life," but that it is all one; where we feel that we, as well as those who have left us, are living the immortal life. Let us make these things real; let us live among the spiritual realities of existence; and we shall find that sorrow, though not removed, is made a hallowed thing, and far easier to be borne. Every one probably remembers the little poem which compares the death of children to the Alpine shepherd carrying the lambs up to higher and greener pastures, whither their mothers follow. It is true of every death: it is a call to go up higher, into a life that shall include within its sweep the present and the future, the mortal and the immortal.

"Go up higher." Let us give heed to these words until our life is one with God. That is the

highest ; and, when there, nothing can assail or alarm us, evil can have no power, and life will be full and free, with joy that knows no measure, and "peace that passeth understanding."

III.

WHAT DOEST THOU HERE, ELIJAH?

"What doest thou here, Elijah?" — I KINGS xix. 13.

THE story of the prophet Elijah is one of the most interesting to be found in the Old Testament. Appearing at a time when the Hebrew nation was in great danger from the idolatrous worship which had been established, Elijah seems to have been sent to stem the tide of religious corruption which was tending to blot out the worship of the one true God. The kingdom over which Solomon reigned was, at his death, rent asunder; the tribe of Judah being left almost alone, while the other tribes were united in the powerful kingdom of Israel. Gradually the worship of the idols of other nations made its way among the people of this northern kingdom; and gradually the worship of the one true God died out among them. The worship of these idols seemed to be firmly established by the marriage of Ahab, one of the rulers of the northern kingdom, with Jezebel, a daughter of one of the Canaanite princes. Under the pat-

ronage of this woman, two temples were erected, — one for the worship of Baal, the sun-god, and the other for the worship of Ashtaroath, the moon-god. With each of these temples were connected four hundred priests, who were fed at the table of Jezebel, and who engaged in the worship of Ashtaroath, which worship consisted of the most shameful rites. Not content with the establishment of the worship of the gods of her native country, Jezebel also instituted a persecution of the Jewish religion, by ordering all of its prophets to be put to the sword. This cruel order, as far as possible, was carried into effect ; all the prophets being slain except those who escaped by hiding in the caves of the mountains.

At this time there appears upon the scene that character of Hebrew history, — Elijah the Tishbite, the prophet of the Lord. Of his birthplace and early history nothing is known. Clothed with a girdle of leather, with a mantle of sheepskin over his shoulders, and with his thick, long black hair flowing down his back, he suddenly appears before Ahab the king, and declares unto him, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shalt not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Immediately after delivering this message he disappears, and is not seen

again by the king for many days. The story of Elijah as connected with this period of drought is too well known to need repeating here in full, — his dwelling in retirement by the brook Cherith, and afterward with a widow of Zarephath; his sudden appearance to Obadiah the governor of the king's house, and then to Ahab the king; the trial upon Mount Carmel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal and Ashtaroah; the triumph of Elijah, and the slaughter of the idolatrous priests; the storm which followed; the flight of the king before the approaching storm, riding in his chariot twelve miles to the city of Jezreel, with the prophet running before the chariot, even to the entrance of the city.

Immediately after the occurrence of the events just glanced at, it seemed as if the triumph of Elijah and the true religion was complete; the prophets of Baal and Ashtaroah were destroyed, and Ahab seemed to favor the prophet. But Elijah soon learned that the struggle was not over. If Ahab was willing to submit, his queen Jezebel was not; and from her Elijah soon received the threatening message, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them, by to-morrow about this time."

This threat of the woman Jezebel, Elijah seemed

to fear more than he had the opposition of the king, and all the prophets of Baal and Ashtaroth. At this threat, either his courage failed him, or his disappointment at the renewed opposition was so great that his whole character appears changed. He gives up the struggle, flees from his post of duty into the wilderness ; and there under a juniper-tree he sits down, and, like a child in a pet, he bemoans his fate, saying, "It is enough ; now, O Lord, take away my life ; for I am not better than my fathers." And after that he journeys forty days and nights, until he comes to Mount Horeb, where he finds a cave which he occupies for his place of lodging. And while there, far from his work, hiding in a cave, disappointed and disheartened at what seems his hard lot in life, and disposed to lay all the blame upon his fate, and none upon himself, the word of the Lord comes unto him, and says, "What doest thou here, Elijah ?" The spirit of God, speaking within, is forcing upon him the question, Why has he fled from his duty ? And he tries to answer it with the excuse, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts ; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword ; and I, even I only, am left ; and they seek my life, to take it away." But

this excuse cannot silence that still small voice. He cannot remain quiet ; and, although a storm is raging, forth he goes from the cave, and stands upon the mount. The rushing wind roars around him, rending the mountain, and breaking the rocks in pieces ; but the noise of the wind cannot drown the voice of God in his soul. The mountain shakes with the fury of the storm, but the voice of God is heard within ; the lightning flashes around the mountain, yet it cannot draw his attention from that still small voice, ever repeating the same question as before, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" The prophet tries to quiet the voice by repeating his former answer about the forsaken covenant, the prostrate altars, the murdered prophets, and his own loneliness and danger. But it is of no use : the voice is not silent. The still small voice—the voice of God, the voice of duty—at last compels him to resolve that he will return, and complete the work which he has begun, even to the anointing of the prophet who is to succeed him. As soon as this resolution is formed, the whole horizon brightens. He is not alone, and there is less danger than he had tried to see. "I have left me," said the same voice, "seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

This period of despondency, during which Elijah was driven into the wilderness in a complaining, petulant mood, has always appeared to be a strange episode in the life of the prophet, so great is the contrast between his character at this time and what it was both before and after. It is hardly possible to believe that the bold and courageous prophet as he appeared at other times, and the desponding, complaining man fleeing to the wilderness for solitude, was the same person. Think of him standing alone before the eight hundred priests of Baal and Ashtaroth, while they were calling upon their gods to hear them, mocking and taunting them in every possible way that thought could suggest; think of him, at a later period of his life, when the king had gone down to take possession of a long-coveted vineyard, whose former owner he had caused to be murdered, meeting the king in the vineyard, and denouncing the unrighteous deed before his face; then think of him fleeing from duty, and sitting under a juniper-tree, complaining petulantly, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life,"—and a greater contrast it would be difficult to imagine.

The apparent strangeness of this desponding period of the prophet's life is doubtless accounted

for, to a great extent, by the contrast which it forms with the other portions of his life; for a similar desponding and complaining mood would hardly be noticed in a character naturally less bold and courageous. Indeed, such a period of despondency and complaint as that of Elijah is one of the most common things in life. Such a spirit we see manifested nearly every day, and very few are the persons who have never been subject to its influence. When a man is engaged in some good work, either for his own self-improvement or for the benefit of others, how often will some little obstacle so annoy him that he thinks he is justified in relaxing all his endeavors! If his object is self-culture, some evil disposition or habit thwarts his purpose; and he begins to despond, despair, and complain, saying or thinking, "It is enough; I have tried to do this work, but every thing goes against me; and, if I do no more, not I but the Creator is to blame." If he is endeavoring to benefit his fellow-men, he finds that they do not aid his endeavors, do not respond to his call, do not appreciate his work; or perhaps they criticise him harshly and unjustly, or misjudge his motives, or find fault unreasonably with him or with what he does; and thereupon he assumes an air of injured innocence, and petulantly complains, "It is

enough ; it is of no use to try to benefit my fellow-men." And perhaps he spends months, years, and possibly the remainder of his life, vexed with the world because it has treated him unjustly, or failed to appreciate him ; while all the time he rejoices in the thought of the way he retaliates upon the world by depriving it of his valuable services. That this is no fancy sketch, we are all aware. Very few of us can say that we have never seen any thing of the kind in our own lives, or that we are unconscious of possessing a spirit that may, at any time, manifest itself in this way. If we only had the right kind of spectacles, we should all see each other, at times, sitting each under his own juniper-tree, and with an air of injured innocence despondently complaining of the treatment we have received from some of our fellow-men, and thinking to ourselves, "It is enough : we will cease all effort in behalf of others."

Perhaps the minister, as often as any one, sits under his juniper-tree, and desponds and complains, all the while feeling like relinquishing his work. He entered his profession, believing that he could do some good in the world. He dreamed of a parish in which he could call out all the Christian love and good-will, and unite the people in Christian work. Perhaps he was at first partially

successful ; but there comes a time when he finds that the parish as he would like to have it, and the parish as it is, are very different things. Instead of parish-life flowing smoothly and harmoniously, there are little eddies, whirlpools, and cross-currents, which destroy the smooth and harmonious flow ; and he sits down with the feeling that a minister's work is a hopeless task, and perhaps with a regret that he ever undertook it. The same is true of men in other professions, and in business. Although their daily labor may not be in the direction of the moral and religious education of the world, how many start out in life with the intention, not only of acquiring wealth or fame, but of doing something for the improvement of their fellow-men ! And if no obstacles occur they carry out their intentions ; but if any thing thwarts their purposes or plans, they are ready to despond. If business is less prosperous than they desire, if they are deceived in any charitable object, if their benevolent or religious work is criticised harshly and unjustly,—they flee to their juniper-tree, and declare it is enough : they will do no more. Perhaps some men enlist in the work of a Christian church, doing what they can to further its interests, and extend its influence. They are earnest workers so long as every thing in the

church accords with their opinions. But let some little thing go contrary to their ideas of what is best, and immediately they leave the church, and run to their juniper-tree, and despondingly complain, "It is enough : I can do no more." Most young women set out in life with an earnest moral purpose, with a desire to further the interests of Christianity, and to advance the moral and religious interests of the world. If life proves as bright and as beautiful as their anticipations, they carry out their purpose, and prove earnest workers for the relief of the suffering world, and for the moral and religious improvement of all. But if life proves less beautiful than was anticipated, if disappointments come, and crosses have to be borne, they often provoke a sacrifice of those high interests, and induce a period of desponding and complaint, which leaves the subject of it deprived of the real joy of a true service, which would go far to counterbalance the disappointments and crosses of life. From such a state of mind, or from such a mood, it is difficult for a person to extricate himself ; because, all the time, he feels that he is not to blame for it. There is a real cause for it. There are difficulties, trials, opposition, and dangers ; and so long as he dwells upon these alone, he feels justified in his course. The real

question he fails to see ; which is not, Is there any real cause ? but, Is the cause sufficient for such a course ? There are difficulties, trials, opposition, and dangers in every life. The question is, Ought they to drive us from the path of duty, or to summon us to exert ourselves to do our duty in spite of them ? Every person in such a mood as I have described, when they can so silence their desponding and petulant complaints as to hear the still small voice within, the voice of God, will hear it saying to them, "What doest thou here ? Why is it that thou hast fled from thy post of duty ?" Suppose difficulties, or dangers, or opposition should gather around, you are not justified thereby in deserting the cause which you profess to love. I acknowledge the ease with which we drift into such moods ; but I believe that just so far as we earnestly desire to know and to do what is right, just so far as we are willing to listen to the voice of conscience, we shall decide that such a course is unwise, unchristian, unmanly, and unwomanly. Elijah, when he fled from the post of duty, with a prophet's instinct travelled till he came to Mount Horeb, where God had previously revealed himself, and where the associations of the place might lead him to listen calmly and patiently for the voice of God. When we are tempted as

Elijah was, let us do as he did,—retire to the deepest solitude we can find, the silence of our own hearts, where the voice of God is most likely to be heard; and there it will speak so that nothing can resist or overcome it, until it drives us back into the path of duty.

And it is easy to see why this must always be the bidding of the voice of God. When we allow difficulties, dangers, and opposition to drive us from the path of duty, we assume that a true life is hardly more than a pleasure-trip, in which we can wander here and there with no definite end in view. Neither our own sober thought, nor the experience of others in the past, teaches us that. Do we not feel that every true life has some noble ideal before it, some moral and religious ideal, given it by God to follow through its appointed time? And to let little difficulties, trials, and dangers, or even great ones until they are proved to be insurmountable, prevent us from realizing those ideals, shows us sadly lacking in true courage.

And when we study the lives of others, we see that the most of the best work which has been done in the world has been done in spite of opposition and dangers; and we learn the lesson that we are not to succumb to the first difficulty we meet.

What farmer would be worthy of the name, who should flee into his house in a desponding and complaining mood, because there were weeds in the field that he was cultivating? And yet sometimes men will flee from some noble work in which they were interested, and give themselves up to despondency and complaint, merely on account of little difficulties and trials, of no more consequence than the weeds in a farmer's garden. Look back along the centuries, and see how the best and noblest work has been done under the heaviest trials and difficulties, and we shall be thoroughly ashamed of sitting longer under our favorite juniper-trees. Look at Washington, never fleeing, though strongly tempted, from the task to which he had been assigned, laboring under every difficulty that could be heaped upon a man in his position,—want of men, money, food, clothing, sympathy, and appreciation,—yet triumphing over them all. Look at Columbus, and his difficulties, trials, and dangers, both before and after the discovery of America. Look at Luther, fighting the devils in every shape, as they arrayed themselves in his path. Look at the early Christians, serving God in those underground dungeons, the catacombs, and banishing even from their symbols of death every thing that was not

pleasant or beautiful. Look at Paul, enduring all things in order that he might accomplish the work assigned him. Look at Jesus, in loneliness, weariness, suffering, and death, doing his Father's will. And let us roll back the curtain from that other world, and behold that multitude which John saw, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb. "These are they which came out of great tribulation." Let us think calmly of all these, and the influence which their example ought to have upon our lives; and if we are not made ashamed of any cowardly flight from duty and God's service that we are indulging in, it must be because all manly and Christian sense of shame has departed from us.

"Back, then, complainer! loathe thy life no more;
Nor deem thyself upon a desert shore
Because the rocks the nearer prospect close.
Go: to the world return; nor fear to cast
Thy bread upon the waters, sure at last
In joy to find it after many days."

IV.

LET THE DEAD BURY THEIR DEAD.

"Let the dead bury their dead." — LUKE ix. 60.

THESE words appear to many persons to be the strangest words that Jesus ever uttered. There is a seeming harshness in them, very different from his usual way of speaking, and wholly inconsistent with our idea of the feelings of his heart. He had asked a man to follow him, and be his disciple; and the man, apparently desirous of doing so, requested permission to first go and attend the funeral of his father. This request Jesus refused, saying, "Let the dead bury their dead." The meaning appears to have been, Let those who are dead to the truth attend to the burial of their friends. We are so accustomed to think of Jesus as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," that we think he must have been especially tender to all who were for a time like himself in this respect. And so I think there must have been some particular reason, which does not appear in the narrative, why that man should, then and there, have

left all and followed the Master. We are told that Jesus once said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, he cannot be my disciple." This saying indeed has a harsher sound than the other, and is so contradictory to the whole spirit of the life and teachings of Jesus, that hardly any one thinks of interpreting it literally. The thought of Jesus which was in both of these sayings is, that, if a man desires to live a true life, there must be nothing to tempt him to turn back, not even the dearest ties of kindred. He must go forward, and forget what is behind. "Let the dead bury their dead." Or, leaving out the personality of the expression, which is the principal occasion of its seeming harshness, we can express the same truth by the well-known verse of Longfellow:—

"Let the dead past bury its dead."

While we believe, therefore, that as Jesus used those words there was no intentional spirit of harshness implied, yet there was in them a stern summons to present duty, to be obeyed in spite of all the calls of the past; and that same summons must be obeyed to-day, in the same way, by every person who would make his life any thing better than a failure.

If we look around us, we see everywhere illustrations of the principle, that all life and growth are promoted by forgetting the past, by allowing the dead past to bury its dead. The planet on which we live appears only as the fit and proper home of man, with no suggestion of the various geological stages through which it has passed. The records of the far distant past of mankind, known as the "stone age," the "bronze age," and the "iron age," are buried out of the sight of the race to-day, and show themselves only to the searching eyes of scholars. A government, to be effective, must bury all past issues, and attend to the questions of to-day. Youth must put aside and bury the careless and happy spirit of childhood, if it would perform well the duties of its own period; and men and women must bury the pleasures of childhood and youth, that they may be true to the work of manhood and womanhood. Not that these things are to be erased from the memory, for they never can be; but they must not be allowed to absorb the interest and the powers which are needed for the present. Whatever may have been our past, we must not live in it, otherwise our lives must prove a failure, not only in the sight of man, but in the sight of God. Suppose a merchant should learn to-morrow morning that his

store, with all his accumulated wealth, had in the night been burned to the ground. Would you call him a wise man if he should spend five years, or one year, raking over the ashes of the ruins? Would not the only wisdom consist in his burying his past out of sight, as well as he could, and then going forward as if there were no past? So in that far more important business, — the accumulation of that which constitutes character, — it may sometimes seem a stern principle, but it is nevertheless a true one, that the past must be buried, and we must throw our whole mind, heart, and soul into the work of the present.

This is especially true of those who have fallen into sin, or of all of us so far as we have sinned. It is not the wisest course, as some seem to think, to keep alive the memory of sin as long as possible, in order that it may serve as a warning; for the good which is accomplished by the warning is far less than the evil which is effected through discouragement. There are, I suppose, some people who think that every man who has committed a crime, and has suffered imprisonment therefor, should ever after be made to realize his sinfulness and his disgrace; and, if they could have their way, they would send every discharged convict out into the world with some mark of Cain upon him which

he could not conceal. But men who can read human nature know that there is no surer way of keeping a man once a criminal always a criminal than this; and that the best way to insure a decrease in the criminal class is to aid such men to forget and to bury the whole of their past lives. There is no truer Christian service than that which is performed by the men and women in many of our States, who stand ready to help every discharged convict to forget and to bury his past life, and to start anew; for that is one of the most important conditions of subsequent reformation and success. The same thing is true concerning all sinfulness, whether we call it a crime, a wrong, a fault, or an evil habit. If we desire to be free from its control and its power, let us do our best to bury it, and set our faces towards something better. After we are once sure that we are sorry for our sin, and are ashamed of it, the best thing that we can do is to bury it, and give our whole hearts to the true life that we desire to live.

Neither is there any reason why we should continue to keep alive the memory of sin, and mourn over it, because of the fact that sin is transgression against God. He does require us to repent of, and to be sorry for, our sins: but he wishes us to

be free from their control as soon as possible ; and if forgetting them is the quickest way to that freedom, then it must meet with his approval. The very spirit of the divine forgiveness is that mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah, and afterwards by a writer of one of the books of the New Testament, as a part of the new covenant which God would make with his people, that "their sins and iniquities he will remember no more." If God will forget the sins of which we truly repent, there can be no reason for our keeping them in perpetual remembrance, in order that we may never cease to mourn over them.

There are lines which I remember to have read somewhere : —

" Man-like it is to fall into sin,
Fiend-like it is to dwell therein,
Christ-like it is o'er sin to grieve,
God-like it is all sin to leave."

The true way to leave sin is to leave it, and the memory of it also. And, besides its being the true thing to do, both as men and as God regard it, to forget and bury our past sins, there is the greatest possible help which any one can have to enable him to do so, in the sympathy which he will receive from all whose sympathy is worth having. Let it be known that any person is endeavoring to

free himself from the control of sin, by repenting of it and turning from it, and trying to forget and bury it, and whatever that sin may be, a crime, a wrong done to some other person, a fault, or an evil habit, immediately that person has the sympathy of every one possessed of the Christian spirit, and they stand ready to aid him to the best of their ability. And, more than this, he has the sympathy of Christ and God, and of all those who have passed into the better world; for does not Jesus say that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"? What does all this mean but that when we repent of our sins, and turn from them, and set our faces toward a better life, all the spiritual powers of heaven and earth combined yield us their aid and sympathy? Who, then, is not ready and willing to say of all that is sinful in their lives, "Let the dead bury their dead"?

But can we say this of our sorrows and troubles? These are things which often paralyze our powers, and seem to bring to a standstill all active Christian life. Of course I do not suppose that there is any possibility of our forgetting them by any act of the will. The very idea of sorrow and of trouble is that of some loss in the past, upon which our minds cannot avoid dwelling. By no possible

effort can we wholly forget or bury it. Time only may work such changes that it will be at last deprived of much of its keenness. But, for all that, it may be possible for us to bury so much of our sorrow and trouble as tends to deprive us of all Christian endeavor and action. And when that can be, and is done, the character comes forth purified and refined as by fire, and possessed of a nobility and sweetness attained in no other way.

When Absalom was slain, his father, David, mourned for him in such a way that all his people were paralyzed with fear and shame, until Joab went to him, and, with words that must have sounded like those of Christ, "Let the dead bury their dead," compelled him once more to be a king in reality, as he was in name. In time of war, a soldier is always borne to the grave amid solemn dirges; but as his comrades turn from the grave the music changes, and with its martial strains reminds them of the duties from which no sorrow can release. The same thought is brought into that beautiful poem on the death of Sir John Moore:—

"But half of our heavy task was done
When the clock tolled the hour for retiring;
And we heard the distant and random gun
That the foe was sullenly firing."

It is so in all life. There is a call to duty which sorrow and trouble can interrupt but for a short time, and which bids us leave them behind, so far as they hinder earnest Christian endeavor.

No one can deny that the Christian religion has effected a great change in the minds and hearts of men regarding the loss of friends. Evidences of this are seen in all directions, — in the Christian houses of mourning and in the very tones of the mourner's voice. The very trees and shrubs and flowers which adorn our cemeteries speak of a hope in the human heart which no sorrow can extinguish. Truly we can say that we sorrow not now as those before the time of Christ, who had no hope. As we sit by the last resting-place of the forms of the loved, and think of them, we do not look downward: we look upward, and it is Christianity that has turned our faces upward. But there is yet one thing more that remains for the spirit of Christ to accomplish in connection with our thoughts of friends who have passed on before. It is to lead us, not only to look upward, but forward. That is not the sublimest truth that our friends live again, but that they live in a region of endless progress; and hence, when our thoughts reach out after them, they must reach not only upward, but forward. The Christian view

of sorrow should lead us not to be utterly cast down as we think of the past, when friends now gone were here ; and not merely to think of them as above and at rest, where we may meet them hereafter ; but it should enable us so far to bury our sorrow that we may go onward in the same path in which they are progressing, so that we may meet them hereafter with as much as earth can give us of the spirit of heaven with which we shall find them possessed. That little child whose spirit left your home, when you meet it again, will not be a child in thought and affection ; that son or daughter, husband or wife, father or mother, brother or sister, from whom you parted, when you see them again, will not be just as they were when they left you. All these will have their characters made more beautiful and glorious with that "soul expansion" which is provided for in the very air of the better world. If we think of them only as they were when we lost them, if we dwell only on their past, we shall not know them when we meet them, or at least we shall not understand them. Time works great changes with friends who are separated here on earth. Why should it not work still greater changes when one is in heaven ? If you send your child away to a distant school, and do not see her again

until she has become a woman, unless you have prepared yourself for the change, you will hardly know her when you meet. Will it be different if the school to which our children or friends go is in another world? It is not, then, a harsh thought, but one that ought to seem perfectly natural, that our sorrow — the past of our friends who have left us — must in one sense be buried, that we may apply ourselves to that growth of the Christian character which will keep us near to them in spirit. Christian sorrow, therefore, should incite us to renewed activity in the Christian life, though separated in the body. Bryant caught the true spirit of Christianity in that poem in which, describing a friend who had entered into "the joy of the Lord," he makes the culminating thought, not merely of some future meeting, but of the possibility of progress in the same path in which she had walked before him, or, as the poem describes it, success in the same contest as that in which she had been a conqueror: —

"Still flows the fount whose waters strengthened thee:
The victors' names are yet too few to fill
Heaven's mighty roll; the glorious armory
That ministered to thee is open still."

There is another way in which we may apply

the words "Let the dead bury their dead;" and that is, to whatever Christian attainments we may have reached. All these, as it were, must be buried from our sight, and we press forward to still greater heights. Paul represents the beginning of the Christian life as a dying to sin, and rising with Christ into newness of life. The Christian disciple is a new creature; but for all that he describes the Christian life as one of endless progress, — as a continual forgetting and burying of the past, and a reaching-forth to something better. "I count not myself to have apprehended," he says; "but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And he writes to the Corinthians, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." The apostle's idea of the Christian life is, therefore, to bury the good which we have attained, and seek some higher good.

The command of Jesus is, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." When we have obeyed that, we may rest contented with that to which we have attained. When a disciple asked Jesus, "How oft shall my brother

sin against me, and I forgive him ? till seven times ? ” he replied, “ Until seventy times seven ; ” meaning that there was to be no limitation to the spirit of forgiveness. Is not this a lesson which we all need to learn, not to be satisfied with any present Christian attainments, but to leave them behind, bury them, and seek for something higher ? Do we ask ourselves often enough, Can I not have more than I now possess of the spirit of forgiveness, charity, love, good-will, peace, helpfulness ? Am I doing all that I can for my own Christian growth, and for the Christian growth of those around me, and of the community in which I live ? When we think that we have all of any virtue that we need, it is pretty good evidence that we have really but little of it. The old story of Sir Isaac Newton comparing what he had learned to a few pebbles, and what he had not learned to the ocean, applies here. The more of the Christian spirit that we acquire, the less we think we possess ; while at every advance, the Christian life seems greater and more sublime than ever before. If, therefore, we think we have gained as much of Christian virtue as we need, if we think we have apprehended the whole of Christianity, let us put these things behind us, forget them, and bury them, and reach forth to something better and

higher. Then we shall begin to live that Christian life of which Paul had glimpses, and which was in Jesus Christ.

These, then, are the reasons why I think we ought to apply those words of Jesus, "Let the dead bury their dead," to our sins, our sorrows, and our virtues. And when we look at the words in their true light, I think we must feel, that, instead of being stern and harsh, considering the possibilities of the Christian life, here and hereafter, they are the kindest words that he could have spoken to us. They are like the sound of a trumpet, which ought to awaken us from all spiritual slumber and death, and summon us to a march, a contest, and a victory, worthy of sons of God and heirs of immortality. In the words of another, let me state the application of all that I have said : —

"Rise! if the past detains you,
Her sunshine and storms forget;
No chains so unworthy to hold you
As those of a vain regret:
Sad or bright, she is lifeless ever;
Cast her phantom arms away;
Nor look back, save to learn the lesson
Of a nobler strife to-day."

V.

LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY.

"The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand." — ISA. xxxii. 8.

WHAT is liberal Christianity? is the question which I wish to try to answer. But why ask and try to answer such a question? perhaps some may say. Can we not look into the dictionary, and learn the meanings of the two words, and put them together? or can we not turn back to the time when the expression was first used, and see what the meaning was then? But they who say this seem to forget that words are not the lifeless things which at first they seem to be. Words have their periods of growth, of change, of decline, and decay; so that what a word means to-day is no evidence of what it meant two or three centuries, or half a century, ago; and what it meant half a century or more ago does not determine what its real meaning is to-day. If a man who lived three or four centuries ago should revisit the earth, he might possibly get into some trouble

by speaking of people who live in the country as "villains;" and yet he would be using the word with its primitive meaning, but which it has now lost entirely. In our old English version of the Bible, we are told to "take no thought for the morrow," — very foolish advice, every person will say, according to the present meaning of the words; but, when the Bible was translated, the expression "take thought" meant "to be anxious," or "to worry," which gave a meaning, which is now found also in the new version, that is worthy of being heeded. So that expression found in the Bible, "Holy Ghost," gives us an idea of personality that was not found in the words as used at the time of translation, — ghost meaning simply "spirit," and ghostly, "spiritual."

If I mistake not, the words and expressions which are used in religion change more rapidly than most other words and expressions. Some of us can remember many very marked changes that have taken place in such words during the past twenty-five or fifty years. Take the words "orthodoxy," "evangelical," "conservative," "heresy," "radical," — how different is the meaning attached to each one of these words now, from that which belonged to it a quarter or a half a century ago! It is well for every individual, at least for every

religious society or denomination, to do occasionally what every wise merchant does once a year, — take an account of stock. The merchant goes from one end of his store to the other, takes out every article, measures or weighs it, brushes off the dust, cobwebs, and moths, or wipes off the rust, and computes what it is actually worth at the time. If he should neglect to do this for a long time, leaving many things to slumber amid the accumulated dust, to go out of fashion and out of demand, and estimate their actual value at the original cost, he would make himself out a far richer man than he really is, — a pleasant thought at the time, but not a very safe one upon which to base his future business. The other plan, that of estimating every thing at its present value, shows him just what he is worth, and furnishes him with a safe foundation for subsequent operations.

The children of this world are sometimes wiser than the children of light; or men and women are sometimes wiser in their business transactions, than they are in their religious. And thus it often happens that many men and women and churches have sundry packages laid away in their intellectual and theological storehouses, labelled with certain good old names of "Calvinism," "Or-

thodoxy," "Conservatism," "Evangelicalism," and many others besides, the value of which they estimate at just what it was twenty-five, fifty, or one hundred years ago. Once in a while, some individual, dissatisfied with such a course, resolves to examine his own private stock. He pulls out from the corners, and down from the highest shelves, these packages with the dignified names, brushes off the dust, cobwebs, and moths, and measures, weighs, and settles their value, in the light of modern thought and inspiration. Sometimes he comes to the conclusion, and acknowledges it openly, that he can no longer estimate these things at their original valuation; or he says nothing, leaving people to find out from his general speech and life that he has thrown aside some things which he once regarded as valuable, and has taken a new departure in religion. Perhaps the church to which he belongs shuts its doors against him, preferring still to regard its treasures as they were regarded in the light of the past, rather than as they are seen in the light of the present.

Let us, however, be willing to look at every thing connected with religion in the light of the present time. We may not be able to settle all questions definitely, for there are many questions

in religion, as in every other province of thought, which must still remain open. Yet let us do what we can to learn the present meaning of words and terms common to religious thought and speech. Let us to-day look at the meaning of the term "liberal Christianity," tracing it from its original meaning through whatever periods of growth and change it may have experienced.

Who first used the expression we do not know. But sixty-five years ago we find Channing speaking of it as something comparatively new, and using it himself to denote an absence of bigotry, and the presence of a generous feeling towards all who claim to be Christians, of whatever sect or name. This, I suppose, was the original use of the word,—to denote a form of Christianity in which there were to be, as Channing says, "no tests or standards of Christian faith and Christian character, but the word of Jesus Christ and of his inspired apostles." Channing allowed that there were "Trinitarians and Calvinists who justly deserved the name of 'liberal.'"

But this liberal feeling towards Christians of every sect and name could not exist long as the result of a real spirit of liberality, without its reaching out in other directions. "The liberal deviseth liberal things;" and the men who were truly

liberal in one way would devise liberal things in other ways ; or, if they as individuals could not, the denomination to which they belonged would naturally do so, in the course of time. Liberality towards men of different sects and names must in time be seen to rest upon a deeper principle, — that of liberality towards reason itself. If it is once conceded that a man has the right to use his reason in deciding any one question, it must follow that he has the right to use his reason in deciding all questions. The acknowledgment of this right was somewhat slow in coming ; and, during quite a long period, many Christians liberal by name seemed to cherish hard feelings towards such men as Parker and others, whose reason led them still farther away from the established boundaries of orthodoxy. And it was not until one of our foremost scholars declared that there is no alternative in religion, except that of “reason or Rome ;” that there is no logical standing-ground between those two points ; that every person must appeal in all things to his own reason, or submit to and be guided in all things by a church like that of Rome, which claims the right to exercise such authority, — that the real foundation-principle of a true liberal Christianity was reached. And most of the changes which have taken place in

liberal Christianity during the past twenty-five or thirty years have been the result of the application of this principle to the various departments of human thought. To make liberal Christianity true to its name, it was necessary that it should be liberal, generous, without bigotry, and without prejudice toward all the conclusions of human reason. And the results obtained by the application of this principle constitute the liberal Christianity of to-day.

One of the earliest applications which was required, was to the conclusions of the reason in regard to science. This was not such an easy thing to accomplish; and fierce was the contest waged between the theologians on the one side, and the men of science on the other. It was only a continuation of that contest waged by Romish theologians against Galileo, who declared that the earth moved round the sun, while the sun stood still, — a conclusion which seemed opposed to the literal interpretation of that passage in the Bible, in which it is represented that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still. Geologists, as they read the interior history of the earth, declared that it could not have been made in six days, but that long periods of time were occupied in the process of creation. All kinds of opposi-

tion were made to this theory, and every possible plan was devised by which the seeming conflict between science and the Bible might be evaded. Hugh Miller, an ardent devotee of science, and a firm believer in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, wrote his last book, "Testimony of the Rocks," to prove that there is no real conflict between Geology and Genesis; but by most unprejudiced persons, the book was probably regarded as a failure; and the tragic termination of the author's life, which occurred shortly after, was attributed by some to a similar secret conviction of his own mind. An interminable war between the armies of science and of religion seemed to have been inaugurated, when the adherents of liberal Christianity applied their foundation-principle to the solution of the difficulty, and frankly acknowledged, that, if human reason, the gift of God to man, guided by patient investigation, decided that the true history of creation differed from that recorded in the Bible, then the results of reason must be accepted, although the theory of the verbal inspiration of the Bible must thereby be surrendered. And that is the position which liberal Christianity occupies to-day in regard to the whole domain of science, extending to it the same liberal and generous feelings which it formerly bestowed

upon Christians of different sects and names. It says to the geologist, Follow with reverent steps the "footprints of the Creator" through the different strata of the earth. It says to the chemist, Search out the hidden laws by which the elements are bound together and controlled. It says to the astronomer, Explore all the wonders of this universe which lies around us, and bring us the results of your patient investigations and deliberations, and whatever they may be, if they are facts, and not mere guess-work and speculation, we will receive them as a divine revelation from that same Being who spoke to listening patriarchs, prophets, and apostles of old, and who speaks to every reverent listening mind and heart to-day. That I believe to be one acknowledged position of liberal Christianity to-day.

Another direction in which liberal Christianity has extended its liberal and generous feelings is towards the different religions of the world. There was a time when the only attitude which Christianity seemed to assume towards the other religions was one, not only of superiority, but also one in which the claim was made for an exclusive control of all truth and goodness. If any trace of truth or goodness could be found in other religions, it was thought it must have been placed

there by the Devil, for the purpose of deception, or in some way to have been carried from Judaism or Christianity. All other religions, it was claimed, must have been the product either of superstition or imposture. But to-day liberal Christianity, at least, takes an entirely different attitude, and acknowledges that every thing true, as well as every thing good, in all religions, must have had the same source as had all that is true and good in Christianity,—the inspiration of God. Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, and Mohammed were not impostors, but fellow-workers in the kingdom of God, manifesting to the world so much of light and truth as they were able to receive. Liberal Christians believe with Paul, that, among all nations, God left not himself without witness, and that “the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.”

Liberal Christianity has also extended its liberal and generous welcome to all the results of reason, as applied to the Christian religion itself. Reason has been invited to examine, with all the critical acumen of which it is possessed, every part of what claims to be Christianity, and to decide what are accumulated errors, and what is the truth, which

is what Christianity claims to be. As the Founder of Christianity said to the people of his time, "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" so liberal Christianity believes that it is the privilege and the duty of every person to exercise his reason in regard to the claims of Christianity as a whole, and also in regard to its particular doctrines. And this right liberal Christianity emphasizes, because it believes that the simplicity and purity of Christianity has been perverted, and almost smothered, with the accumulated dust of theological systems.

If we turn to the results of reason thus applied, we shall find that liberal Christianity to-day regards the Bible, not as a book the writers of which were supernaturally prevented from making a single mistake, but as a series of books, containing principally the records of the growth and development of the religious idea among a people who seem to have had what may be called a remarkable genius for religion. In the calm narrative of history, the glowing terms of prophecy, and the beautiful words of poetry, the story is told of the emerging of a nation from the gloomy shades of idolatry and human sacrifice, led by the spirit of God speaking within the heart to the highest and best of the race, just as it speaks now, and going

forward step by step, until it reaches, in the person of Jesus, the highest possible form of religion, in which there is no binding creed or ritual, **except** to do the will of God. The Bible is the product of the human mind, aided by the spirit of God in the same manner that that spirit renders its aid to-day ; but, with its wonderful story of religious experience, struggle, despair, hope, aspiration, consolation, joy, and peace, rendering the most valuable service to every religious life which is known to the world. And this view of the Bible, liberal Christianity claims, renders it far more helpful to every reader than any other view of it that was ever held.

With regard to the founder of the Christian religion, liberal Christianity says, in the words of Paul, "*the man Christ Jesus.*" And in saying this, liberal Christianity feels that it is not bringing Jesus down, but lifting humanity up ; for Jesus came not to reveal the divine in himself, but to reveal the divine in man. "Channing" (according to Dr. Bellows, in his late sermon at Newport), "in the view which he took of human nature, and in his own following of Jesus, made himself the leader of a humanitarian movement which he did not even completely or logically perfect in his own theology, but which has since, largely under his inspiration, become more definite and courageous."

And in this, liberal Christianity believes that the founder of the Christian religion is brought nearer, and made more helpful to every human soul.

Liberal Christianity calls God "father;" and not only calls him so, but accepts that name as expressing, so far as man can understand the divine nature, the real character of the Deity. And, as a consequence of this, it feels that it would be wrong to accept any theory of the divine government, or of the dealings of God with his children, which is in the least opposed to all the love and tenderness expressed in that sacred name. And hence liberal Christianity rejects entirely the doctrine of everlasting punishment, as utterly inconsistent with every thought and feeling which that name implies. A father's punishment never can be revengeful, but only remedial. If that doctrine were true, the name of father as applied to God would have an entirely different meaning from that which it has when we call an earthly parent father.

Liberal Christianity regards human nature as not totally depraved, even at its worst. There is no soul so low but has such a spark of the divine within it as may be developed, through the natural influences of the spirit of God, into the character of the purest angel in heaven.

Liberal Christianity holds that salvation is the perfecting of this human nature, and not safety from any future punishment ; and that therefore there is no salvation except through character. There is nothing external that a man can take in his hand, here or hereafter, be it creed, profession, or authority of any church, that will have one feather's weight in making him acceptable to the heavenly Father. There is no being, however exalted, who can purchase, with any price that he can bring, our acceptance with that Father. We are all his children. We are accepted as his well-beloved children, only through what we bring in ourselves.

Liberal Christianity regards the Christian church as composed of all those who are seeking the truth and the perfect life. It has no walls to separate its members from their fellow-men, but principles by which they are made capable of rendering greater and better service to the world. An English Episcopal writer, writing of the church of the future, says that that church will not say to men, "Here is our theological club : we invite you to enter it. Our by-laws can be demonstrated almost with the same cogency as Euclid : accept them, and you shall be made comfortable for life and for all time after ; reject them, and you shall be tortured for all eternity,"— but, rather, "Here is the kingdom of God :

we citizens of it find a great peace in it, and a wonderful help toward well-doing, in serving God as he has been revealed to us by Jesus of Nazareth, whom we regard as his eternal Son. We welcome all comers as citizens, we impose no intellectual conditions, we recognize the restriction of no laws. We find, that, in the fellowship of united though imperfect worship, there is a strange power knitting Christians together, and making Christ more intelligible." That which this Englishman describes as the church of the future, we believe to be the church of the present, and to be found in the liberal Christian church; and we invite men and women into it, not because they have become perfect, but that we may help each other bear the burdens, and rejoice in the joys, of life. Like the Alpine climbers, who bind themselves together lest any one losing his foothold may be lost, so we believe in joining hands together, so that no one by any mis-step shall lose his birthright of a divine peace and satisfaction in life.

Liberal Christianity does not regard this world as a ruined world, but believes, that with its burdens and sorrows, which serve as discipline, there are mingled innumerable joys, which bespeak a loving Father's hand and care, and that the best preparation for the world beyond is to use this world

wisely and well. Here is heaven, as well as there; and they who miss heaven in this life may be a long time in finding it in the future life. This world is God's world, — a world of beauty, joy, and delight, — and not merely or chiefly a vale of tears; and it only requires right living to reap the truest and deepest joys here, and to be assured of them hereafter.

A few days ago an aged liberal Christian minister in a neighboring city, the day before his death, after a long sickness of intense suffering, which had been borne with the utmost resignation and cheerfulness, was listening to the reading of the Twenty-third Psalm, beginning "The Lord is my shepherd." When the reader came to that verse, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," the patient sufferer interrupted the reader, and said, "No, no; not the valley of shadow, it is the valley of light." Those words express the true idea of life, and of what we call death, as accepted by the liberal Christian. The shadows of life and the shadows of death roll away before the simple and childlike trust in the love and goodness of the heavenly Father; and what seems to so many the valley of the shadow of death is only the valley of light, leading upward to the light of the eternal hills.

I have thus glanced hastily at a number of subjects, each one of which contains enough for many discourses ; for I have thought that it might be well at this time to stand on some mount of vision, and take a survey of the goodly land which we believe is our divine inheritance, and which I trust we all intend to go over and possess. Such a religion I trust we all find a joy in trying to live, and therefore I find a joy in trying to preach. Let us be assured that God's blessing goes with us, as we all sincerely endeavor both to live and preach it in word and example.

VI.

TESTING OF CHARACTER.

"Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." — LUKE xxii. 31.

NOTWITHSTANDING the many mistakes of Simon, or Peter, there was much in his character that we cannot avoid admiring. He may have been over ardent, and too much inclined to boasting; but there was a certain openness about him, such as never fails to gain the respect, if not the admiration, of all earnest people. Yet the virtues, as well as the faults, of Peter were continually leading him into mistakes, trials, and dangers. It was Peter, who, for the devoted love which he bore to his teacher and friend, could not consent, at first, that he should perform for him the menial service of washing his feet. It was Peter, who, when Jesus was arrested, could not bear to see him led away alone, and who, although all the other disciples had fled, followed him into the high-priest's house. Jesus, knowing his impulsive nature, knew that he would follow him

into the midst of his enemies, where he would be compelled, in order to save his life, to deny him before the dawn, or cock-crowing.

It was with this general knowledge of the character of Peter, and the temptations into which it would naturally lead him, that Jesus had said to him, "Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." This sifting to which Jesus referred was not the separation of the coarser from the finer parts of the flour, but it was the last process in the preparation of the grain for use. After the grain was harvested, it was threshed out, by oxen treading upon it, or by a sledge being drawn over it; then it was winnowed, by being thrown up into the air; and then it was placed in a sieve and shaken, so that whatever particles of chaff, dirt, or refuse remained might pass through, leaving the pure grain. The prophet Amos uses the same figure, when he represents God as saying, "I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." Sifting, therefore, was the last test of character. Whatever good there might be in the character, however much pure grain, all that could not stand this test, every thing which would pass through this sieve, must be rejected as not genu-

ine. From what Jesus taught about the supremacy of God, I cannot think that he believed there was any such being as is generally understood by "Satan," who shared the government of the universe with God, or who held by far the larger part of it. Jesus also sometimes used the word Satan in a way that showed that he did not mean by it a personal prince of evil. If he had such a belief, he never could have called one of his disciples Satan, as he did Peter. At another time, he said to his disciples, "I beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven," which I do not see how any one can interpret literally. By those words which he addressed to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat," I understand his meaning to have been, that the evil companions and influences by which Peter would be surrounded, in his attempt to follow his Master, would show how much his professions of attachment, which he had just made, were worth. He would be tried, sifted, and shown how much of that character of which he was ever ready to boast was pure grain, and how much chaff. In his spirit of confidence, Peter thought that nothing, not even death, could swerve him from his allegiance to his Master. But the trial, the sifting, which he was to endure, would show him how much of that

confidence was worthless ; and that, in order to save himself from harm, before the morning, he would deny, with oaths, that he ever knew Jesus.

An experience similar to that of Peter's comes to us all. In the words of that time, we may still say, Satan desires to have us, that he may sift us as wheat. The evil which we meet in the world tries, tests, and sifts us, and shows, if we will only give heed, how much of what we call our moral character is wheat and how much is chaff. It is an old question, not yet satisfactorily answered, why evil is allowed in the world ; yet, if it is desirable to test, or sift, the character of moral beings, as a means of moral progress, no better world than this can be desired. It is not difficult to be moral heroes in the seclusion of our own thoughts and imaginations. In imagination we are all "knights of the Holy Ghost," and on many a battle-field "more than conquerors are we." But it is only when our virtues can endure the light of the world, only when they can stand the strain which evil puts upon them, only when they survive the sifting which they find in a world like this, that we can call them true and genuine.

Illustrations of this principle are seen everywhere, in the material and intellectual world as well as in the moral. The real worth of any

thing is determined by its ability to stand the test, or sifting, to which it is subjected in the outward world. The real strength of an iron casting is never known until it stands in the place which it was intended to occupy. It may be as a pillar, supporting the floor of some factory filled with machinery; it may be as a part of the pier of some bridge, against which at times the winds and waves beat with relentless fury, and over which roll the heavy trains of the railway; it may be as the shaft of some ocean steamship, or the piston or connecting-rod of her engine, upon which, when the tempest rages, there comes a constant and pitiless strain. In such places as these, the strength and value of the metal are tested and sifted as they never could have been, had the metal remained in the foundery. There is a new ship in the harbor, apparently a marvel of completeness and beauty; but no captain can know her real worth until he has watched her in frequent storms. Out on the railroad-track there is a new locomotive, bright and perfect apparently in every part; but an engineer never can know its real value until with it he tries to draw heavy cars up a steep grade, or to run an express train sixty or seventy miles an hour. It is by exposure on the sea or land, that the physical capacity of men is

tested. It is life in the army and in active service, that sifts a man as regards his efficiency as a soldier. So places of trust and responsibility test and sift a man, in regard to his intellectual capacity, as school and college never can. Everywhere, indeed, this sifting process is going on; and the wheat of strength and ability is separated from the chaff.

In former times there was a very common thought,—and it is not altogether wanting now,—that the highest moral and religious life could be lived only by fleeing away from all the trials, tests, and sifting processes of the world. Men shut themselves into monasteries, and women retreated to nunneries; or they went away, each one by himself or herself, and dwelt alone in caves; and one man, who had a few followers, spent nearly forty years upon the summit of a lofty pillar. In such places of retirement as these, secure against all contact with the evil of the world, they fondly hoped to realize the highest ideal of the Christian life. But the result of such a theory and practice was not the most to be desired. Such a theory and practice might furnish them, indeed, with more time for religious devotion and communion than most people could secure, but the character formed thereby was far below our

modern ideal. If it were pure and devout, it was also childish and timid, and not a character manly and robust in the men, or truly womanly and noble in the women. As we look back at the characters of the monks and nuns of former times, we can see that they lacked just that contact with the world, and that sifting by the evil of the world, required by our modern ideas of the Christian life.

In almost every direction we see the sifting of moral and religious principles. Christ is led away captive, and men who profess to be his followers deny him constantly. Or, stated in another form, the evil principles of the world are in direct opposition to the principles of Christianity, the principles of honor, truth, and righteousness; and yet oftentimes men who claim to be upholders of the latter desert them utterly in their business and in their lives. You will hardly find a person who objects to the Eighth Commandment, or who will not say that it is his duty to heed those words, "Thou shalt not steal." So strong is the feeling in regard to that command, that every one resents, more quickly than almost any thing else, the accusation of being a thief. Yet mingling with the world gives men a very thorough sifting in respect to this command. Many a man who professes to

obey it falls into the company of those who think it foolish to be too strict in regard to the ways of making money ; and soon he is led to deny his principles, and seek his fortune with his new-found friends. It is a common opinion, and there is considerable reason for it, that there is a great amount of dishonesty in the world. And what is dishonesty, in all its forms, but a violation of the command, "Thou shalt not steal" ? All cheating and deception in trade, all forms of swindling and embezzlement, all use of other people's money without their consent, is neither more nor less than stealing. There are men, who, if they had remained in private life, would have been considered most exemplary Christians, but who, when holding positions of trust, in which they have had the care of large sums of money, have been sifted by Satan like wheat. We all know of instances of men, who were not only considered moral, but who were prominent in the church and in prayer-meetings, who took advantage of the positions of trust which they occupied, and used, for their own benefit, money intrusted to their care, and who are now confined as criminals in prison. Where they are, they have opportunity for repentance, and for making their characters what they once outwardly appeared to be. The world may be slow to confide

in them again ; but, for all that, they may gain and be conscious of an integrity of which they never dreamed before. I have heard of a prisoner saying that his prison-life was the best thing that ever happened to him, for it had shown him just what his true character was ; and he could go out and begin anew, and be a man of principle, both outwardly and inwardly. There are some men who seem to need to go to the lowest deep before there is any true conversion or turning around. That great denial by Peter, that fall, over which he grieved so much, was undoubtedly the turning-point in his career, from which he went forward and became one of the most devoted disciples of Jesus, and one of the boldest preachers of his truth.

But, on the other hand, we must remember that the results of this sifting by Satan are not always the same. There are hundreds of men in every city who fill positions of trust and responsibility, and who handle every year large sums of money not their own, who resist every temptation, and never use a cent of the money in their care for their own benefit, and who by such a course manifest to themselves and to the world the pure wheat of their personal characters.

Another way in which we are all sifted by Satan

is the way in which we are led to keep, or to refrain from keeping, the second great command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." That is a part of our religion, we say in the church ; but what do our actions say in the world ? How do we act when we meet in the world people who have different dispositions, temperaments, and opinions from our own ? Do we try to bear with them, love them, and treat them as if they had the same right to their opinions as we believe we have to ours ; or do we forget the principle and the obligations which it imposes upon us ? Remember the illustration of the way in which that command should be obeyed, given by Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan. It was the man whose opinions were the most opposite to those of the wounded man, who manifested compassion and mercy. The spirit of Christianity, the spirit of true manhood and womanhood, commands us all to go and do likewise to every neighbor whom we meet. It will not do to keep aloof from the world. People who keep a calm and unruffled spirit, only as they mingle with a few select friends cannot be sure that their principle of love is very deep. The shallowest brook may preserve a placid surface so long as there is not the lightest breeze to disturb it ; but let the gentlest wind arise, and

it is disturbed and ruffled : while it requires a storm or a tempest to disturb the calm of the deep river or ocean. Or to use the figure of sifting : where the sieve is quiet, we do not know how much chaff and how much pure wheat it contains ; but let it be disturbed and shaken, and the separation begins. So of our natures : while they remain quiet and unmoved, it is difficult to tell how much love of humanity they contain ; but let them be disturbed, shaken, or agitated, and the truth appears. And so through the whole of life, the real character is revealed, and we are made to know ourselves, by the test with which the evil of the world tries us, by the sifting which Satan compels us to undergo.

Longfellow, in one of his poems, brings before us, in his impressive way, the lesson to be derived from this story of Peter.

“ In St Luke’s Gospel we are told
How Peter in the days of old
Was sifted ;
And now, though ages intervene,
Sin is the same, while time and scene
Are shifted.

Satan desires us, great and small,
As wheat to sift us ; and we all
Are tempted :

Not one, however rich or great,
Is by his station or estate
Exempted.

No house so safely guarded is
But he, by some device of his,
Can enter;
No heart hath armor so complete
But he can pierce with arrows fleet
Its centre.

For all at last the cock will crow,
Who hear the warning voice, but go
Unheeding,
Till thrice and more they have denied
The Man of sorrows, crucified
And bleeding.

One look of that pale, suffering face
Will make us feel the deep disgrace
Of weakness.
We shall be sifted till the strength
Of self-conceit be changed at length
To meekness.

Wounds of the soul, though healed, will ache;
The reddening scars remain, and make
Confession;
Lost innocence returns no more:
We are not what we were before
Transgression.

But noble souls, through dust and heat,
Rise from disaster, and defeat
 The stronger;
And conscious still of the divine
Within them, lie on earth supine
 No longer."

VII.

WHAT SHALL I DO WITH JESUS?

"What shall I do with Jesus?" — MATT. xxvii. 22.

IT was very unfortunate that the Roman governor, or procurator, of Judæa, in the time of Jesus, was such a man as Pontius Pilate. Had that office been filled with a man of resolution and moral courage, he, as well as the prominent Jews of his time, would have been spared the disgrace of the crucifixion of Jesus. As we read the story of the trial of the Saviour, we can hardly avoid feeling that his murder was owing as much to the weakness of Pilate as to the malice of the Jews; for according to every principle of justice, and according to his own acknowledgment, he was bound to release Jesus. To the chief priests, rulers, and people Pilate said, "Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man, touching those things whereof ye accuse him; no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done

unto him." After such an explicit statement as that, it is one of the strangest things in history that Pilate should have surrendered Jesus to the Jews to be crucified. But, when a man is wanting in moral courage, — the courage to do what is right without fear of consequences, — there is no telling to what acts of gross injustice he may be led to stoop. And so, on account of the moral cowardice of Pilate, the innocent Jesus was led away to death. The whole course of Pilate in his trial was dictated, not by a desire to do justly, but by a fear of consequences ; and he sent Jesus to be examined by Herod simply to gain favor with *him*. And, when Pilate was about to release Jesus, the Jews, probably knowing well the man, cried out, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend : whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." The words were well chosen for the purpose which they were intended to effect. For fear that the Jews might send some unfavorable report of him to Rome, where, above all things, Pilate desired to stand well, he delivered up to death a man whom he knew to be innocent, washing his hands as a sign that he was guilty of no wrong. When the chief priests and elders had persuaded the multitude to ask for the release of the robber Barabbas, instead of Jesus, Pilate put the question,

"What shall I do then with Jesus?" not because he wished to decide that question by knowing what would be right and just, but because he wished to learn what would be most expedient for himself. Had he asked that question, sincerely desiring to know the true answer, he could not have been mistaken. Indeed, the question was doubtless already answered in his own mind. He knew what he ought to do with Jesus, but his weakness and his moral cowardice led him to do just the opposite to that which he knew to be required by the demands of justice. And so there was perpetrated, under the form of justice, one of those murders which have been the disgrace of the human race. Suffering and death have been meted out to hundreds of men and women, simply because the answer to the question "What shall be done with them?" was prompted, not by right and justice, but by expediency.

The question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" is one which was not only important to Pontius Pilate when Jesus was on trial before him, but it is also a question which is important to-day to every one of us. The history of Jesus is such that he is placed on trial before each one of us; and the question, "What shall I do with him?" is as real to us now as it was to Pilate eighteen centuries ago.

We may be slow in acknowledging any such claim upon our attention, because Jesus is not here before our eyes, and because we do not see that his fate depends, in any way, upon our decision ; but, although we do not see him, he is here before us, and the question, "What shall we do with him ?" is one which we ought to ask and answer. We can see that this is so by thinking for a moment of the claim which the memory of a man like Washington has upon us. Suppose we should ask an American what he thinks about the life and character of Washington, and he should answer, "I don't think any thing about him ; I never trouble my mind to decide whether he was, or was not, a great, good, and patriotic man : it is no concern of mine." Should we think such a man just towards the memory of Washington ? Should we think that he had any right to treat in that way a person who occupies the place of Washington in our history ? Most certainly we should not ; but we should say, that, if such an indifference were to prevail to any great extent, there would be gross injustice done to that great man's memory ; and we should also say that every American ought to feel partly responsible for the way in which his memory is preserved.

If we can say so much concerning Washington,

how much more can we say concerning Christ? Remember how much the world is indebted to him, remember how much of all that is good and grand in our civilization comes from him, remember that there is no other person who occupies such a place in the regard and love of the civilized world as he,—and is it not one of the strangest things that any persons can be found to say that they have never tried to make up their minds about him, that in their thoughts they really do not know what to do with him? And more than this: Jesus is not only brought before us by the interest which the world manifests in him, but he is brought before us by his own desire. Washington did not lay any claim to the consideration of his countrymen. His people have accorded it to him. But Jesus has a claim upon our consideration, not only on account of the position which he occupies in the world, but on account of his own demand for it. It was his wish that his truth should be given to, and received by, all nations. “Go ye,” he said to his disciples, “and teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” He challenges our attention, our opinion of himself; and the world has approved of his right to make such a challenge. And when we consider his claims upon our consideration, and the world’s

acknowledgment of those claims, we must feel that no individual has a right to slight them. He is really on trial before each one of us to-day ; and there is no more important question to be found in the life of any one of us, than this which Pilate asked : " What shall I do with Jesus ? "

And upon the answer which we give to this question, there depends not only the matter of doing justice to the memory of Jesus, but, to a certain degree, that of the influence which his truth shall exert in the world. Just as upon the answer which Pilate made to that question depended the fate of the person of Jesus, so upon the answer which individuals make now depends the fate of his truth, — whether it shall or shall not be a power in the community and the world. I know that we, as individuals, are apt to think that very little, if any thing, depends on the answer which we make to such a question as this. We do not see how our answer is to affect the fate of Christianity in the world, or the Christian character of the community in which we live. But this thing ought to be decided, not by what our sight and feelings may suggest, but in the same way that the question of duty ought to be decided by a soldier. It may be often difficult for a soldier to see or feel just how his faithfulness conduces to the

effectiveness of the army of which he is a part, yet a little thought will show him that the power and effectiveness of the whole army depend solely on the combined power and effectiveness of the individual soldiers; and so, for what the army accomplishes, or fails to accomplish, each soldier is partly responsible. Just so far as all the soldiers of an army realize this truth, and act upon it, depends what the army will succeed in doing. In the same way, every man and woman ought to decide what is his or her duty in regard to the Christian army. Is it not plain that its power and effectiveness depend on the interest and faithfulness of individuals? Suppose every man and woman in this community should place this question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" plainly before themselves, and answer it honestly and candidly, and then should act according to their answers: would not the moral and religious tone and character of the community be improved? Can there, then, be any mistake in regard to the duty of each person? And can any one fail to see that the cause of Jesus, that Jesus himself, is suffering just so far as he neglects his duty? I know that many a person says it will make no difference what he does, because it is certain that not every one else will be faithful. But is that any excuse? Would an officer in an army

be satisfied with such an excuse for faithlessness in a soldier? We know he would not; and can we expect that the Leader of the Christian army will be satisfied with it? And, besides, we have no right to say that our want of faithfulness will make no difference in the result: no one can tell what will be the consequence of his desertion from the post of duty. The fate of an army, or of a cause, has often depended on the faithfulness, or unfaithfulness, of a single person. Are not the poet's words about Paul Revere's ride true, "The fate of a nation was riding that night"? Let us beware of that excuse for the neglect of, or indifference to, duty, unworthy of every thoughtful mind, — "it will make no difference."

"Say not the struggle naught availeth,
The labor and the wounds are vain:
The enemy faints not, nor faileth;
And as things have been, they remain.

"If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars.
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the flyers,
And, but for you, possess the field."

Am I wrong, then, in saying that Jesus stands before each one of us, on trial, and that it is our duty to ask and answer the question, "What shall I do with him?" Is there any question of more

importance than that which is concerned with our relations to him? If there is, then this question may be set aside; but if not, it seems to me we are recreant to our duty until this is asked and answered.

Perhaps it may be thought unnecessary for me to suggest what the answer should be; that it is enough to urge the question upon every one without intimating how it should be answered. But it may help us to answer aright, if we look at one or two ways in which the question has been answered by others. When, in this age, we ask ourselves the question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" it is presupposed that we are familiar with the story of his life; that we understand the great moral and religious principles on which were founded all his teachings; that we know the claim which he made for his teachings, — that they contain the truth of God; that we know something about the reception which his truth has met in the world; that we know how our civilization rests upon his truth: and, if we know something of all these things, is it too much to say that we owe an allegiance to Jesus such as we owe to no other character in history? Are we not under some obligation to comply with his wishes? And if it was his wish that all those who sympathize with him in his allegiance to

truth, should take his name as a bond of union, in order that there might be one united army acting against error and sin, are there any valid reasons for not complying? When we ask, "What shall I do with Jesus?" ought not the answer to be, "I will take him for my example, my leader, through the whole of life"? And ought not the answer to be given so openly that the weight of our influence and example may be used in his favor? When we remember what Jesus has done for the world, what he has done for each one of us of which we are directly conscious, and when we think of what we might have been to-day were we not heirs of all that is good and true working through the ages from him, — I see not how we can refrain from an open acknowledgment of him. I should as soon think of slighting a friend who had saved my life, as refraining from acknowledging, in the most open manner, what I owe to Jesus. And yet I suppose the influence of Christianity to-day is not one tenth part of what it would be if they who know how much they have derived from him would only acknowledge it. And of this delay in, and hinderance to, the progress of his truth, and of the cause of it, Jesus must be aware. There is recorded a saying of his: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before

my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." It seems a hard saying, and perhaps it would be, were it any thing more than the statement of a law which no power can change. The present influence of Jesus and his truth in the world depends upon the allegiance, or the want of allegiance, of all who have learned what that truth is. And just how far that influence is promoted by your confession and mine, or just how far it is retarded by my denial or yours, can be determined only by that Being whose wisdom and knowledge are infinite. It is, then, not a trifling, but a very serious matter how we answer this question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" There is one good rule to guide us, and that is, to answer the question as we should like to say we had answered it if Jesus were on the earth, and standing before us to-day.

One other way in which this question may be answered is by laying more stress upon allegiance to the truth of Jesus than to him personally. Of course this is included in the other way of which I have spoken. No one can bear any true allegiance to Jesus personally, without bearing allegiance to his truth. And we may say, also, that no one can be really loyal to the truth of Jesus

without being loyal to him personally. According to his own teaching, they are more truly his followers who do the will of God, than they who cry "Lord, Lord!" that is, profess personal attachment without doing his will. There is no doubt but that loyalty to the name of Jesus, and also to his truth, when combined, do the most effective Christian service; but a person may place loyalty to his truth far above loyalty to his name, and still be a true Christian disciple. When we ask ourselves the question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" we may say that we will be loyal to his truth, and may justly feel that in so doing we are, in a certain sense, loyal to him. The man who resolves to stand by what is true and right, although it may cost him no small amount of sacrifice, is answering this all-important question in a way which is far from displeasing to Jesus. The name of Jesus may seldom be on his lips; but, if he possesses that spirit which leads him to stand firm for the true and right, he will never need be ashamed of the record which his life makes upon the influence of Christianity. And this, after all, is the most important thing in our reception, or treatment, of the Saviour. He who taught his disciples to cut off a hand or a foot, or to pluck out an eye, rather than be led into evil, can have

but little respect for the loyalty of that man who gives up what is true and right rather than suffer any inconvenience. How much would a sovereign prize the loyalty of a subject who could forget his loyalty whenever it cost him any inconvenience? And Jesus prizes such loyalty no more. We may repeat the name "Lord, Lord!" every morning, noon, and night; but, if we are unwilling to stand by what is true and right when it requires some sacrifice, we are only among those of whom Jesus will say, "I never knew you." A conscience which is often for sale on very easy terms, or which may be readily turned one way or another, as self-interest may dictate, is not a conscience for which He who called himself the Truth can have any respect. Selling the true or the right is simply selling Jesus. It is the same crime as that of Judas and Pilate. We may wash our hands figuratively, and say we are innocent, and leave Jesus and his truth to the world, but we can no more clear ourselves of disloyalty than could Pilate clear himself from the crime with which the whole world has charged him. Whenever a man, or a cause, is prized according to any other principle than that of truth and right; whenever personal, political, national, or ecclesiastical selfishness is placed in the scale, instead of righteousness and

truth,—then it is that Jesus again is judged, condemned, and sent to the cross as by Pilate. Yesterday it was an African standing before the politicians of the land, in whose ears resounded the cry, “If thou settest this man free, thou art not the friend of our section of the country;” and by them he was accordingly remanded to slavery. To-day it is the Chinese standing before the politicians, in whose ears is heard the cry, “If thou givest this man the freedom of the land, thou art not the friend of this section of the country.” In the Old World it is the Jew standing before a nation that is asking, “What shall we do with him?” and in this country it is the Indian who occupies the same position. In both cases we see national selfishness calling for an unjust decision. There is no little washing of hands by those who are ready to make such decisions, and the spirit which underlies them is as readily perceived as that which prompted the decision of Pilate. But it is not alone in halls of legislation or national councils that Jesus is condemned as by Pilate. Whenever any of us proves a traitor to the Christian ideal of truth and right within the heart, and, for the sake of some fancied interest, yields any cause or question to sin or wrong, then it is that the spirit of Pilate within us triumphs over the spirit of Jesus.

Then is Jesus, in his cause, the cause of truth, again crucified and put to shame before the world.

Concerning the latter part of the life of Pontius Pilate, there exists no authentic account. There are many legends about his going to Rome, and finally ending his life by his own hand. According to one of these legends, he hid himself from the world on a mountain near Lake Lucerne, now called Mount Pilatus, where at last, driven by remorse and despair, he plunged into a lake which occupies the summit of the mountain. There, according to the popular belief, as stated by Walter Scott in one of his stories, "a form is often seen to emerge from the gloomy waters, and go through the action of one washing his hands;" an idle story, it may be said, but, for all that, suggesting this truth, that an act like that of Pilate's can never be recalled. We may live as if Jesus had no claim upon our allegiance, or we may prove false to some cause in which he appears, and, whatever we may do thereafter, these things can never be recalled. The wheel of time never turns backward.

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,

In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side.

Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the
bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the
right;
And the choice goes by forever, twixt that darkness and
that light."

Let there be given then, and given early in life, the right answer to this question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" for, during our pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave, we meet with no question more momentous. The rejection of Jesus, together with what such rejection includes, will surely prove destructive of every noble trait which we possess; while the reception of him, together with what that includes, — unswerving allegiance to what is just and right and true, — can, and can alone, ennoble and glorify the character of man.

VIII.

DRAW NIGH TO GOD.

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."—

JAS. iv. 8.

A STORY is told of an eccentric English clergyman, who, having occasion to preach a charity sermon, took for his text the words of Solomon, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord;" and who for his sermon had but this single sentence: "If you like the security, down with the cash." It seems as if the text which I have chosen might be treated with almost equal conciseness: if we believe that God will draw nigh to us whenever we draw nigh to him, let us draw nigh to him. But I imagine that the questions which might be asked would not all be settled by such a sermon. There is a great deal in that word "if." *If* we believe that God will draw nigh to us. How many of us believe it? and, if we do believe it, to how many of us is it a reality? How many of us fully realize, that, as we turn our minds and hearts towards that Infinite Being, he also

turns towards us? "Such knowledge," we may each of us well say, as David said of the omnipresence of God, "is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

One difficulty which stands in the way of our believing that God draws nigh to us when we draw nigh to him is the vast difference which exists between the finite and the infinite. We are finite: God is infinite. We are weak: he is omnipotent. We are imperfect: he is perfection. Is it right to expect that we can effect any change in him? If we do turn towards him, is it any thing more than a mere fancy to think that he turns towards us?

I acknowledge that this is a difficulty of considerable magnitude, but is it insurmountable? When we look at the material world, we find a law or principle prevailing everywhere, that bodies of matter attract each other. If it were not for this attraction of gravitation, every stone, house, animal, and human being that rests on the earth would be thrown off into space by the rapid turning of the earth on its axis. But all of these rest securely on the earth, by force of this attraction, this drawing nigh to each other of all bodies of matter.

And this principle which holds true in the ma-

terial world is also true in the intellectual world. Minds engaged in similar intellectual work feel a sympathy with, or are drawn nigh to, each other. And this is true not only of minds of equal, but also of most unequal capacity. Louis Agassiz and Benjamin Peirce were drawn to enthusiastic beginners in their respective branches of science, just as truly as they were to men who could understand readily their highest thoughts. And the same principle holds in the spiritual world. People of real religious feeling sympathize with, and are drawn nigh to, each other; and the purest saint on earth is drawn towards the beginner in the religious life, as truly as the beginner is towards him. This was true especially of Jesus. He was drawn towards every seeker of the truth, just as he was towards the young man, who, running to him, and kneeling before him, asked, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" and of whom it is written, that Jesus beholding him loved him. Moreover, the Apostle John makes this sympathy with, or this drawing nigh to, our brothers the evidence of our own religious life. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

These, I know, are only illustrations, and, as we may say, prove nothing : but if, after thinking of these things which I have mentioned, we find it impossible or difficult to believe in the reasonableness of God's turning to us when we turn to him ; in the reasonableness of that Being who is the Father of our spirits, and in whose image we are made, drawing nigh to us whenever we draw nigh to him, — then I see not how we can avoid believing that God is less sympathetic, less loving, and less kind than the creatures whom he has made.

But if one difficulty still remains, in the thought that God must be unchangeable, let us remember that in speaking of God we are obliged to speak after the manner of men. We say that God loves all his children ; but just what is the difference between his love for a child who does his will, and for a child who does not try to do his will, it is difficult to tell. We know that an earthly parent may have equal love for his children, of whom one tries to please him and the other does not ; but the father feels that he is nearer to the former than the latter. Each child sees his own thoughts and feelings reflected in the father's face. And yet the father, whose love is the same, must also feel nearer the loving child than the unloving, because

that child allows him to come nearer ; and the same may be true of God without his being changeable.

If, then, it seems reasonable that when we draw nigh to God he draws nigh to us, let us ask how we can draw nigh to him, so that we may feel that he draws nigh to us. I answer, first, we can draw nigh to God through nature. There is so much said, however, in our time, about the love of nature, which appears to be due to but little more than the natural enthusiasm of youthful feelings, and also so much is said of nature as if it were only a fit subject for scientific dissection, that it seems almost useless to speak of nature as a source of religious teaching and inspiration. But still I believe that such a view of nature is correct, and that the many great and noble men who have so regarded it were not merely dreaming or deceived. Again and again, men of the truest wisdom have recognized the religious influence of nature. It was a bright bush on the sacred mountain of Horeb that led Moses to feel the presence of God. It was on a mountain that Jacob thought about, and consequently dreamed about, the heavens being opened, and the ladder reaching to earth, with angels ascending and descending. It was on a lonely mountain that

Elijah heard the still small voice of God. It was up into a mountain, or into some garden, that Jesus retired for prayer and communion with God. And, besides these, thousands of men whose names are not in the Bible have had their minds and hearts drawn near to God by the works of this natural world. "The undevout astronomer is mad," said Shakspeare. Kepler, as he worked out some of the great problems of the universe, said, "I think thy thoughts after thee, O God." The thought of Wordsworth has been the thought of many persons who could not find for the thought such words as his :—

"I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts,—a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

Many people, when they read a few weeks ago the account of a blind man ascending Mont Blanc, may have asked why such a man should take the trouble to stand upon that height, from

which he could see no more than from the valley below. But I can understand very well why he climbed that high and rugged mountain, and placed himself in the midst of all that beauty and glory, which, for him, was "at one entrance quite shut out." The very thought that he was standing there amid that wonderful scene, although he could not behold it, aided no doubt by the sound of the rushing torrents, filled his heart with awe and grandeur, and made him feel the presence that disturbs us with the "joy of elevated thoughts." He doubtless felt—yes, he knew—that nature had drawn him nearer to God.

We must not forget, however, that the simple enjoyment of what is beautiful and grand in nature will not of itself draw us near to God. Until we have acquired the habit of seeing God in, or thinking of him in connection with, every scene of beauty, grandeur, and sublimity in nature, we must try to acquire the habit, by associating the thought of God with such scenes. To some persons such an association of God with nature comes without any effort whatever. It is as natural for them to think of God in such a connection as it is for them to realize that a scene is beautiful, grand, or sublime. But this power may be cultivated by all of us who do not have it naturally, until nature

becomes, as some one has suggested, only the garment with which the Creator clothes himself. Then is experienced a joy of which we never dreamed before ; and life, amid the various scenes of nature, becomes a constant source of gratitude and praise. Every object of beauty and grandeur then becomes a part of the glorious temple of the heavenly Father ; and the sounds of singing-birds, of rustling leaves, of whispering winds, of murmuring brooks, of rushing torrents, of foaming cataracts, of roaring waves, of rolling thunder, seem but the mighty organ of this temple pouring forth its grand *Te Deum*, and inviting us with voice and mind and heart to join therein. It is thus that nature lifts us near to God, and brings him near to us.

Another way in which we can draw nigh to God is by working for him, or by entering upon whatever service he approves. Hardly any thing brings us so near our friends as doing something for their good. A mother sits down at evening, and works steadily on some garment for her son who is away in a foreign land, or a wife sews industriously on something for her husband who is on a voyage at sea ; and their needles ply back and forth almost as mechanically as the needle of a sewing-machine, because their minds and hearts are with the absent

ones for whom they are laboring. Fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, as they carry flowers and lay them upon the grave of some dear one, by that little act of service are brought very near to that dear one in heaven. And when we do any thing on earth which we think is pleasing to a loved one in heaven, that service, however simple and homely it may be, draws us very near that loved one. And so, when we enter upon some service which we know is pleasing to God,—it may be some simple service like feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked, or saying a word of comfort to some sorrowing heart, or trying to lift some sin-stricken soul near to the infinite Love,—then it is that we draw nigh to God, and he draws nigh to us. And it may be that some aged woman who gives her time to the poor because they are God's children, draws nearer to God than any cloistered nun who forsakes the world and devotes her life to a constant service of praise and prayer. It is well for all of us who would keep nigh to God, to have some work constantly on hand which we feel, and acknowledge to ourselves, is God's work. Let us then select some one, or more, of the charitable or other enterprises which abound, and devote to it as much of our time and means and influence

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as we think we can spare, and perhaps sometimes a little more than we think we can spare. If we are to work for God in a way that will draw us nigh to him, we must devote to his service something more than the spare change in our pockets, or the mere remnants of our time. When the Jew offered a sacrifice, he was obliged to select a dove, a lamb, or a bullock, without blemish, — a custom the spirit of which we must imitate in all our working for God, or it will fail to draw us as nigh to him as the Jew was drawn by his animal sacrifices. But, just so far as we do work, with something of the spirit of self-sacrifice, so far are we drawn nigh to God, and he to us.

Another way in which we can draw nigh to God is through the study of, or familiarity with, the lives of those who have themselves lived nigh to him. Dante tells us, in his poem, that his guide through the regions of hell and purgatory was the pagan poet Virgil; but that when he approached the boundary of paradise, he was committed to the charge of one who was familiar with its scenes, who alone could conduct him into that region, and show him its glories and the glory of Him who reigned there. And, while we may learn of the things of this world in many different ways, one of the surest ways in which we may be drawn into

the kingdom of the spiritual world, and nigh to Him who rules there, is to be led by those who have lived in that world, and nigh to Him whose glory is manifested there. When the thoughts of a young man or woman first turn to the higher life, what better book can be placed in their hands than the life of Channing, or Mary Ware, or some person who, like them, while living in a world of toil, care, and sorrow, still kept very nigh the heavenly Father? I would not forget the life of Jesus; but let us read it, remembering that it is for an example for us, and that he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

One more way in which we can draw nigh to God is by seeking him in our own hearts. It may be through prayer: but then prayer must be something more than the saying of so many words; it must be, as it has been described, "the honest, sincere, often voiceless, prayer, which comes into real contact, heart to heart, with Him to whom we pray." It may be through meditation; but it must be such meditation as consists in summoning all our powers to dwell upon that ideal of love, righteousness, and holiness enshrined within our hearts. There, in the secret chambers of the heart, we not only draw nigh to God, but we meet him. Only when we realize

this, do we enter into the real joy and peace of the Christian life. Paul tells us of his being caught up to the third heaven, and hearing words which it is not possible for a man to utter. I suppose the heaven to which Paul was caught up was his own heart, that there as he meditated on divine things, and felt the divine presence, he had such impressions made upon him as could not be described by words. Into that same heaven we may enter now, and, realizing that God is really there, receive impressions which it is impossible to describe or explain. "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

And therefore, if we feel the reasonableness of the words, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you," let us remember how we may draw nigh to him; and in one way, or in all ways, let us endeavor so to do. I need not dwell on the advantage of realizing the nearness of God to us. Think over the names of the men who have moved the world: they have been men, generally, whose superior strength came from the consciousness of the presence of God. Paul, Luther, Washington, drew nigh to God, and realized that

God was nigh to them ; and in that belief they accomplished each his purpose. We may not have such tasks to perform as they had, but hardly any person goes through life without feeling the need of a strength for which he will seek in vain in this imperfect human nature. With so much that is beautiful, peaceful, and joyous in life, there are mingled difficulties, trials, and sorrows that can be borne bravely and nobly only by feeling the presence of God within. Surely, the part of wisdom is, when we are free from these various trials, to seek that strength in the presence of God, which in the time of difficulty or danger will never desert us.

IX.

SALVATION OF THE SOUL.

"Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." — JAS. i. 21.

THE salvation of the soul may be said to be the central point in all religions: that is, the principal point of interest in all religions lies in the question, What promise have they for each individual soul, either here or hereafter? In ancient mythology there was the promise of the Elysian fields to the worthy, and the threat of banishment to Tartarus for the unworthy. The Buddhist looks forward to a state of everlasting repose. The North-American Indian hopes to join his ancestors in the happy hunting-grounds of the future. The Jew hopes for admission to the society of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the faithful in the shadowy land of the dead. And Christianity is generally represented as assuring to all Christians an everlasting home in heaven, a place of joy; and dooming all who are not Christians to an everlasting abode in hell, a place

of woe and torment. And this promise and this threat have been used, more than any thing else, to bring men, women, and children into the Christian fold. The greatest possible fear is awakened in the minds of the people, by descriptions of the misery of a lost soul, of a soul banished to hell, the place of torment; and, when fear has usurped the place of reason, then people are ready to be led, without any questions, into any thing that promises relief and peace.

Whether we agree with such a representation of Christianity or not, it is well to ask ourselves, what there is in Christianity upon which all this is founded, either by perversion or misrepresentation. We read in the New Testament about saving the soul. What does it mean? A clear and definite idea of that, derived from common-sense and from the Bible, is of the utmost importance; as it will furnish us a sure anchor when others are drifting at the mercy of the waves of fear and excitement.

Saving a soul, — what does it mean? What is the soul to be saved from, and when can it be said to be saved? A great deal that obscures the light which ought to rest on these questions is cleared away when we stop and ask — or think, for we

already know — what the soul is, or what we mean by the soul.

We use the word "soul" to designate the living principle of each individual, — the immaterial or spiritual part of every person. My soul is *I myself*, not the body, but distinct from it. It is that part which survives death. After death, the body turns to dust. Of what we are here, it is only the soul, the immaterial, spiritual part of us, which lives in the future. If it has a body in the future, it will be, as Paul said, a spiritual body. This fact should set at rest forever all those accounts of future punishment which make it consist in physical suffering. All talk about the soul enduring physical torture is as unreasonable as talk about the human body subsisting on air. The soul is not affected by such things any more than the body is affected by the presence of spirits of the departed, if they ever are near. All stories about a literal fire of brimstone awaiting souls in future ought to be placed in the same class with the goblin stories told to frighten children; and the only use they can serve at present is to frighten those who are children in mind, whatever may be their age or stature. The very thought that it is a soul, the immaterial, spiritual part of man, which is to be saved, proves that it is not to be saved from

material fire or material punishment of any kind. By its own nature, it is safe therefrom through time and eternity. Dante, in his great poem, describes all manner of horrible tortures which the childish thought of his age believed that the souls of those who died outside of the fold of the Church would be obliged to endure. But with those who remember that it is only the soul, the spiritual part of man, that lives in the future, his literal and minute descriptions only awaken a smile. And in the same way we ought to regard all modern descriptions of physical torment of which the soul is in danger. Saving a soul has a meaning, but there is not the shadow of a reason for looking for it in that direction.

Another view of the salvation of the soul is, that there is a certain locality, from entering into which the soul ought to be saved. This locality is represented as a very undesirable place of abode, to which the name usually given is *hell*; and the amount of terror which this word has inspired in the hearts of men is indeed almost incredible. The belief that the authorities of the Church have power to doom whom they please to this abode has turned the proudest and haughtiest of men and monarchs into servile supporters and defenders of ecclesiastical tyranny. It is this

word which the Church has held, like a rod, over the heads of monarchs and nations, and compelled them, like terror-stricken children, to do her bidding. And it is upon the use of this same word that the Protestant churches have, to a great extent, depended to compel men to keep their ranks full.

But, for the same reason that the soul need not fear physical suffering, it need not fear confinement in any particular place. The soul is superior to all changes in locality. We may travel from one end of the earth to the other, and the soul does not change. It is the same in the sunny lands of the South, and in the barren regions of the North; in the flower-gardens of the tropics, and in the Desert of Sahara. There have been men and women who have experienced greater happiness in dungeons than monarchs have felt upon their thrones. And if a soul possesses within itself a source of happiness, that source of happiness will remain in any and every locality. The soul is the arbiter of its own fate, and, as Milton has said, —

“Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.”

And therefore, for this reason if for no other, there is no call for endeavoring to save souls from any particular locality.

Furthermore, there is no need of endeavoring to save souls from hell, because there is not the least particle of evidence that there is such a place as is generally understood by this term. Every one will agree with me, that there is no evidence outside of the Bible, but perhaps not every one will agree with me when I say that there is no evidence whatever in the Bible, of the existence of any such place. I grant that the word "hell" is found in the Bible, or rather that it is found in our English translation of the Bible. But scholars have always known that the words which are translated *hell* have, in the original, no such meaning as is usually attached to that word. And since the publication of the Revised Edition of the New Testament, there has been hardly any excuse for even a child to believe in such a place. The word usually translated "hell" is a word which means the "Valley of Hinnom." Where Jesus is represented as saying, "It is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell," the expression really is, "cast into the Valley of Hinnom." This valley was just outside of Jerusalem, and was a receptacle of all kinds of refuse, to consume which fires were kept continually burning. No one can suppose that Jesus

intended to be understood literally, that the body should be cast into that valley. He used the expression to illustrate the evil results of a certain course of life, and there was in the expression no reference to any locality in the future world. The words of Jesus cannot be interpreted in that manner. If any person will take the Revised Version of the New Testament, and look through it, he will find that in every place where the word *hell* occurs, except two, there is found in the margin the word *gehenna*, indicating that it may take the place of the word *hell*. This word is composed of two words, meaning the *Valley of Hinnom*. In one of the two places referred to the word *Tartarus* is in the margin; but in the other there is no word in the margin, — why, it is difficult to tell, as the same word, *gehenna*, is in the original. And thus it is that there is really no evidence whatever in the Bible that there is any such place as hell. The word which Jesus used has no such meaning as we attach to the word “hell,” and no person is authorized to give that meaning to it. Therefore there is no need of trying to save souls from a place of the existence of which we have not the least particle of knowledge.

As our idea of the soul is that it is of itself immortal, it cannot be death from which it ought to be saved.

And now, as we have seen what the things are from which the soul need not be saved, we are ready to say what it is from which it does need to be saved. From the very nature of the soul, there is only one thing which it ought to fear, and from which it ought to wish to be saved. It does not fear death, it does not fear banishment to any locality, it does not fear physical suffering; but the one thing which it may fear is, that it may sink into a state unworthy of the noble powers with which it is endowed. The soul is made in the image of God, and the range of its life reaches all the way from the god-like down to the brutal. It can abdicate the exalted throne on which it has been placed, and go down to the level of the brutes: by the performance of duty, it can rise to the head of all created beings, and by the manifestation of the spirit of love it can partake of the nature of God. With such possibilities we may truly say, that the soul which is tending downward towards its lowest point is lost or dead. It is really lost or dead to its higher self. And it is from such a state that the soul needs to be saved. When the soul is true to its highest self, then it can trust the future to the heavenly Father.

With this idea of what constitutes saving the soul, we can understand what the process must be.

There can be no such thing as saving the soul in a day or a week or a month. It must be a growth, — a gradual leaving behind of the things which belong to the lower life, and taking possession of the things which belong to the higher. Henry Ward Beecher said truly, "You can no more grow a soul in five minutes, in the heated and contagious air of a tabernacle, than can a juggler mature a rose on the stage before you." This process of saving a soul may begin early in life. Whenever a child is led to forsake the evil which it can understand, and adopt the good, the work is begun. The child cannot understand the whole work, or what it means, any more than it can understand the whole process of education. As years increase, more and more of the work is understood, until the time arrives when the possibilities of the soul are fully comprehended, and when the man can voluntarily choose the direction in which his life should tend, downward or upward. Then the work goes on to the end of life, the soul ever reaching out to some higher good, leaving that which is beneath, and drawing near the perfection of the heavenly Father. It is the failure to realize that saving the soul is a gradual growth, which often robs the Christian life of its earnestness and enthusiasm. Many men believe that the great thing in religion

is to save their souls from some fancied punishment in the future, and, when that is accomplished, that there is not much more to do. After that the Christian life often consists only of an observance of the forms of religion. There was some show of wisdom in the colored woman who went to her pastor and told him she wished to be baptized. "Why" said he, "Aunty, you have been baptized once." — "I know it, massa," she replied, "but it didn't take." Her coldness and indifference she attributed to some difficulty in that ceremony; and she had failed to understand at first that that was not the end of the religious life, but only the beginning. A similar mistake is made when any person fails to see that saving the soul is not the work of one evening, but of a lifetime.

When we speak of saving the soul, we must remember that a soul can never be lost to God. He is everywhere, and will finally bring all souls to himself. The soul must itself live its highest life, or be drawn thither, through suffering, by the hand of Him who holds us all. Certain stars which roamed about the heavens in very irregular paths were called by the ancients *planets*, or *wanderers*; but when Copernicus discovered the true theory of the motion of the heavenly bodies, those wanderers were found to be held firmly by the

power of gravitation and kept in their appointed courses. However far a soul may wander away from God, his hand is upon it, and will bring it at some time to himself. In that poem suggested by the story of a bird whose melancholy note leads the Indians to call it, "the cry of a lost soul," Whittier says, —

"'Father of all!' he urges his strong plea,
'Thou lovest all; thy erring child may be
Lost to himself, but never lost to thee!

"'All souls are thine. The wings of morning bear
None from that Presence which is everywhere;
Nor hell itself can hide, for thou art there.

"'Through sins of sense, perversities of will,
Through doubt and pain, through guilt and shame and ill,
Thy pitying eye is on thy creature still.

"'Wilt thou not make, Eternal Source and Goal!
In thy long years, life's broken circle whole,
And change to praise the cry of a lost soul?'"

X.

ASPIRATION AND WORK.

"Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." — NEH. iv. 17.

THE account which Nehemiah gives of the rebuilding, under his own direction, of the walls of Jerusalem, seems as much like a fairy tale as it does like authentic history. Surrounded by numerous hostile tribes, who mocked at the work, saying, "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall," this little band of devoted Jews, in the short space of fifty-two days, completed the walls and fortifications of the city. But to do this in the midst of so many enemies required not only the greatest alacrity, but also the utmost vigilance: so that, while one half of the people worked, the other half stood fully armed on guard; and even those who labored were never without at least one weapon of defence. "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one

with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."

Similar to the manner of working which Nehemiah required of those who labored on the walls of Jerusalem is the manner of working which God requires of us all at the present time. The work of every Christian is of a twofold character. Every one is called upon to do something for the cause of truth and righteousness in the world, to work in extending the kingdom of God upon earth, and to perform some labor in rebuilding or strengthening the walls of the spiritual Zion. And, besides this work, he must also keep his own heart pure and clean, and guard it from every assault of its great enemy, sin. Like those laborers of old, with one hand he must work on the walls of the New Jerusalem, while with the other he must grasp some weapon with which he can ward off every blow of evil.

Possibly there may be a few, who, by peculiar temperament or experience, seem fitted for only one part of this twofold work of the Christian. On the one hand, there may be those who feel unfitted for any work of charity, of philanthropy, or of extending the kingdom of God in the world; whose sole desire is to keep themselves free from all contamination with sin, and to guard them-

selves against every approach of evil ; and whose sole ambition is

“To wear unspotted garments.”

On the other hand, there may be those who feel themselves peculiarly fitted for the other part of the work, and are inclined to give the most of their thought to the cause of righteousness in the world, and to bestow but little upon their own personal righteousness. If there are any of these two classes, they most certainly are exceptional cases ; and it is difficult to believe that a participation by them in both kinds of Christian work would not much more advance their own religious interests and the cause of truth in the world. As a general thing, we are all called upon to slight neither one part nor the other, but to labor for the cause of truth in the world, and also to guard our own hearts from sin, — every one with one of his hands to work on the walls, and with his other hand to hold a weapon.

It is not, however, uncommon to see those who can by no means claim to belong to either of these classes, neglecting either one part of the work or the other, and believing that they do all that can possibly be required of them. They will hold a weapon or work, but are unwilling to do both.

Here is a man all of whose religion consists in warding off the attacks which evil makes upon him, and in keeping himself unspotted from the world. He strives to resist every temptation which comes from within or without, and keeps a vigilant watch over his thoughts, words, and actions. All the means which he thinks will aid him in this he uses ; being constant at church, constant in his private devotions, and ready to accept any new aids which books, or the spoken word, may suggest. So much of his time and life he gives to his religion : the remainder is devoted to his business and his pleasures. He may possess ability, influence, or wealth, or all of these, by which he could aid some one of the many noble and religious projects of the age ; but the whole of his energy, outside of his particular religious life, is devoted to his business. His religion might almost be called the religion of selfishness, devoted as it exclusively is to his own interests. His heart responds to no call of charity or philanthropy, and never grows warm nor thrills at the thought of some noble project for the benefit or improvement of man. His theory of religion is the same as that of business, — “ Every one for himself ; ” and his whole manifestation of religion is in his irreproachable character. His weapon of defence, his spear, or

sword, of the Lord, is always ready to resist sin in every form ; but so far as the great burden of the Christian world is concerned, the extending of the kingdom of God, the repairing of the walls of the spiritual Zion, he does nothing.

Here is a woman whose Bible, prayer-book, and other books of devotion are her daily companions. She, too, watches every approach of evil ; and her life, so far as respects her personal character, is religious. Her heart is devoted to the one idea of Christian perfection, but her religion never goes beyond herself. Although she has the ability, influence, or wealth, or all of these, by which she could aid the cause of truth in the world, she cares to use no means except those which will advance her own religious interests. She has no ear for the calls of charity or philanthropy : she has no hearty interest in the noble and Christian movements of the times. Her religious life is confined to the cloister of her own heart. There she bows before her God, and there she loves to linger repeating her *Pater Nosters* or *Ave Marias* ; and thence she comes forth to walk through the paths of a sin-stricken world, serene and unmoved, while her garments sweep past the moral lepers, the sin-diseased and sin-deformed, on either side. She holds in her hand a spiritual weapon which she

dexterously wields against every form of evil which assails herself ; while of the great burden of the world which Jesus came to bear, and which many of his disciples are trying to bear with him, she knows and cares nothing.

There are also characters the opposite to these, whose religion consists principally in devotion to some external work, and who are negligent in the matter of personal holiness. Here is a man who is devoted to some charity, philanthropy, or noble reform. Every moment which he can spare from his business is given to this one work, or perhaps he makes it his sole business. He reads, he thinks, and he talks of but this one thing : so that, for want of care and culture, his character displays many a noxious weed which sadly mars its Christian beauty and perfection. He grows up virtually as a root out of dry ground, having no form nor comeliness ; and, when we see him outside of his own specialty, " there is no beauty that we should desire him." His one great idea swallows up all else beside, so that he is much more of a Christian in his particular work than he is in his personal character. Men who give themselves to some particular work of reform are always liable to let their work usurp the duty of attention to personal religion. No one can study the characters of many

of the reformers, without perceiving that, great as was their devotion and sincerity of purpose, they were often wanting in certain fruits of the Spirit, the absence of which renders them unfit for examples of Christian striving. They were earnest workers,—so earnest, that, for the sake of two hands with which to work, they at times let fall the spiritual weapon with which they could ward off the assaults of sin.

The same may be true of a woman who feels summoned to some great work of charity or philanthropy. Her thought becomes absorbed in the one work, and her character will show the neglect of proper Christian care and culture. Certain fruits of the Spirit, such as gentleness and kindness, which above all others help to form the character of the perfect Christian woman, will be wanting; and, however much we may admire her zeal and perseverance, these virtues will not atone for the want of the others. The true Christian woman has a hand for the weapon of defence as well as one for the work to which she deems herself called; and her prayer is not only for strength to work on the walls of the spiritual Zion, but also to be made “beautiful within.”

This separation of the two parts of the Christian character is sometimes justified by the asser-

tion that it is impossible for one person to perform both duties well. That well-known principle of political economy, division of labor, is brought into the religious life ; and it is held to be the wisest plan to require one man to be a great worker, and another to lead a holy life. The reformer justifies his negligence of personal religion, on the ground that the rough work which he is required to perform forbids his attention to the graces of the Christian character ; and the devotional man excuses himself from the rough work of the reformer, because his spiritual hands are too soft and delicate to be soiled and hardened by Christian labor. Valuable as this principle is in political economy, in the Christian life it cannot recommend itself to the thoughtful mind.

In the production of wealth, man has but a few years to labor, and he can become expert only in one or a few things ; so he wisely confines his attention to the one or the few : but in the formation and perfection of a Christian character there is no limit to time ; he has eternity for his labor. It does not become him to narrow the foundations of his character, that he may increase its height in this world, but rather to lay its foundation broad enough to bear up securely the work of this and all succeeding ages.

If we look into the Bible, we shall find, that, in its description or definition of the religious life, these two things — work in the world, and personal holiness — are always both included. Isaiah exhorts the Jews: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Thus, according to the prophet, there was personal holiness to be attended to, — washing, making clean, — and also a work besides, of seeking judgment and relieving the oppressed.

So, also, according to Jesus, all the law and prophets hang on these two things, — loving God, which begets personal holiness; and loving our fellow-men, which induces us to labor for them in the world.

James says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Here appear the same two things, — the life within and the work without.

It is most natural for us to think that these two things, which Jesus, the prophet and the apostle, classed together, are neither exclusive nor inde-

pendent of each other ; and, if we look at them as they appear in the world, we shall find that they are mutually dependent, that the amount of good which either can do is decreased by the absence of the other, and that they must be joined together in every earnest endeavor after the Christian life. Take the worker, the one who feels called to labor against some giant wrong, or to propagate some exalted virtue. Whence comes his incentive to such a work, if not from the depths of his own spiritual consciousness, from his aspirations after truth, and his indignation at sin born in his own spiritual nature, quickened and inspired by communion with God? Luther, like hundreds before him, would have died without knowing that there was an evil in the Romish Church to be restrained or overthrown, had his own heart not been first baptized in the truth and righteousness of God. His own purity, his own righteousness, showed him by contrast the impurity and the unrighteousness with which that church was festering ; and the strength of that hand by which he threw down a part of the wall of Romanism, and rebuilt the walls of Zion, came from personal communion with the infinite Source of all moral and spiritual strength. A perfect man he was not, but his soul must have been very near to God to have gained

even the incentive to the work which he accomplished.

And where can man go for strength to carry on a work to completion, except to that same Source which inspired him to undertake it? When his hand grows weary, when he is ready to turn back after putting his hand to the plough, when the whole world seems turned against him, what can renew his strength but the nearness of the Spirit speaking to his soul: "The Lord is on thy side; fear not: what can man do unto thee?" Besides this, nothing provokes opposition to any reform or good work so much as the faults of those who engage in it; and the opposition is not only against the man, but extends to the cause of which the man is the exponent. Therefore the worker needs to guard carefully his own heart, lest the manifestation of evil which lies within may injure not only himself, but his cause, in the eyes of the world. The world hates insincerity, and it has always had the same reproof for him whom it judged guilty of it. The world must be taken as it is, and it is true that it had rather hear an honest man swear than a hypocrite pray; so that an honest bad man exerts many times more influence for evil than the best of men on whom rests even a suspicion of hypocrisy can possibly exert

for good. Without personal religion, the labors of any minister are vain and worthless : so that, when we look merely at the amount of work which any man can do, it depends almost as directly upon his personal character as upon the strength of purpose and of will with which God has endowed him. The worker not only requires a strong arm with which to build up the walls, but a strong arm with which to grasp and wield the sword of the Spirit against the foes of his own soul. However ardently he may enter upon his work, however faithfully he may resolve to pursue it, the results will be but small unless he is always

"Standing on his guard,
And watching unto prayer."

As necessary as personal religion is to the religious worker, so is religious work to him who would progress in personal religion. Confine a plant to a close and darkened room ; deprive it of all those external influences which come from air and light ; let it depend solely upon what nourishment it can draw, by its own unaided power, through its roots, — and it grows : but, as all know, it grows pale and sickly, and very different from what it would otherwise be. Its true life depends not only

upon its roots being embedded in a nourishing soil, but also upon the exposure of its branches and leaves to the air, light, and warmth of the outward world. Just so the true Christian life depends not alone upon the soul's intimate communion with God, but also upon the unfolding of its powers to the sympathies, joys and sorrows, wants and desires, of the human world by which it is surrounded. Confine a boy to his studies, and deprive him of recreation, and for a time you may quicken his mind at the expense of the body; but finally the diseased body re-acts upon the mind, and both are injured by the process. The spiritual life is, in one respect, similar to the physical: it requires out-door exercise, and from a deprivation of it will follow a general disarrangement of the spiritual powers. The apostle John goes even farther than this, and asserts that the love of God, which is exercised in private communion, cannot exist without the love of our brother man, which is manifested in work. Says the apostle, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" And again he says, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of

God in him?" We have therefore, as a general thing, the right to doubt the sincerity or the reality of that personal religion which pretends to exist for itself alone. It is impossible for us to feel the love of God, the love of holiness and righteousness, in our own hearts, without some desire to make others share the same blessing. Like Paul, we may be caught up into heaven, and hear words which it is impossible to utter; but, if we never attempt to help others, we shall be but little like Paul, who braved every danger that he might make known to others the good news by which his own heart had been gladdened. The true Christian feeling was beautifully expressed in those words of an English minister: "He who has been enabled to see, even dimly, a world of beauty and of joy which his brethren do not seem to see, and to feel heaven-descended influences which his brethren do not seem to feel,—such an one cannot be happy in enjoying these things alone. To live in luxury while his brother is dying of want, to enjoy the light while those around him, though having eyes as he, yet see not,—there is no resting-place here for the earnest Christian man."

Working for others is not only necessary for the existence of personal religion, but it affords one

of the best means for increasing that religion. It is true that our best thoughts and holiest aspirations are born in the solitude of our own hearts, but it is also true that our worst thoughts and most grovelling desires often meet us in the same place. It is in the secret chambers of the soul that God comes nearest to us ; but, every moment while we are there, our great enemy is trying the locks and fastenings of every door and window. Excellent advice, that of old : " Know thyself ; " but there are times when our best course is to flee from ourselves. Jesus was by himself in the wilderness when Satan came with those tempting offers ; and Luther was alone when he threw his inkstand at the Devil.

In the common saying —

" Satan has some mischief still
For idle hands to do " —

is implied the necessity for some kind of labor to shield the heart from evil. And if any work is valuable, of how great value is that work which re-acts directly upon the heart ! — work which by bringing us in contact with human sympathies and aspirations quickens and exalts our own ; work which leaves the glow of health upon the soul, as out-door sport tinges the cheeks of youth. The

flame of a candle in a confined room grows dim and expires, and so does "devotion's flame within the narrow walls of self." The apostles were men of solitary prayer; but they were together, preparing for work, when the Spirit came upon them like a "rushing mighty wind." I have lately read of a mountain traveller, overtaken by a snow-storm in the Alps. So long as he could draw one foot after the other, he battled bravely with the cold, the sleet, and the piercing wind; but at last, benumbed and drowsy, he sank down for the sleep which knows no waking here. Just at that moment he saw another traveller, in a worse condition than himself, even near the point of death. His sympathies were aroused; and he crawled to his fellow-sufferer, began rubbing his hands, feet, and body, and continued, all the time whispering cheering words, till the dying man revived, and was able to walk. But the exertion by which he had saved the life of his fellow-traveller had brought new warmth, life, and energy into his own body; and together they went forward across the mountain, and reached their homes. So when your heart seems cold and dead, when the Christian path seems bleak and dreary, forget yourself, and aid your brother man; give your time, give your influence, give your money; work thus in

some worthy and noble cause, and the altar-flame in your hearts will burn brighter, your spiritual life will be quickened and renewed, and the blessings of God and of the world will cheer and brighten your way.

Your thoughts, perhaps, have already gone forward to One whom neither the mere worker nor the exclusive devotee can claim as his example. The first record which we have of the words of Jesus show that his mission was one of work: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" But when his preparation was complete, before entering upon that work, he spent forty days and nights in meditation and prayer. And thus his life was filled with seasons of retirement, of close communion with God, and with the most earnest working which the world ever saw. And so on to the end, his last great work on Calvary was preceded by that solitary struggle and triumph in the Garden of Gethsemane. He truly is our great exemplar both in working on the walls of Zion, and in wielding the weapons of our spiritual warfare.

Let us not say that we stand at neither extreme, are neither exclusive devotees nor mere workers: let us rather ask if we cannot increase in both, quicken our own spiritual life, and do more for

the kingdom of God in the world, and so learn to wield more dexterously the sword of the Spirit, and to aid more effectually the workers on the walls. Our reward of "Well done" can only be won by

"Earnest toil and strong endeavor
Of a spirit that within
Wrestles with familiar evil
And besetting sin;

"And without, with tireless vigor,
Steady heart, and purpose strong,
In the power of truth assaileth
Every form of wrong."

XI.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. . . . Fear ye not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." — MATT. x. 29, 31.

THE doctrine or question of Divine Providence is one which has exercised the minds of men at all times, and in all places. It seems impossible for any one of us to look around upon the mysteries which everywhere prevail, without often being sorely perplexed in attempting to find for them a reasonable and satisfactory solution. Says one writer on this subject, "Where and when, in what age, or part of the world, has not the thoughtful and feeling mind occupied itself again and again with meditations on Providence? Now delighting in the felt presence of a superior Power, whose smile is in the rejoicing heavens, and upon the glad earth; now standing in awe of the resistless agents that spread desolation and ruin around; now feeling a delicious trust towards the bounteous

Hand that supplies every want ; now shrinking before the mysterious Will that sends calamities against which there is no resource, — where and when has not the faith in Providence been perplexed occasionally, if not confounded, by observing the seemingly fortuitous course of human events, in which outward blessings and outward sufferings are made to befall the good and the bad to a great degree alike ? ”

Most of us doubtless remember instances when the question, how much could be attributed to the providence of God, and how much could not, exercised the minds of the people in a very marked degree. Whenever any calamity befalls an individual, a community, or a nation, there are always those who think they are able to point out the precise thing for which God sent the calamity as a punishment. Ten years ago, when the great fire occurred in Boston, there were men who felt able to decide for just what that calamity was sent. It was stated at the time, in one newspaper, “The conflagration was imputed by the clergy to the providence of God ; but by the laity, to the folly of man as exemplified in narrow streets, high buildings, and tinder-boxes built for roofs.” I think, however, that there were many of the clergy who did not attribute the fire to the providence of God, as

that providence is generally understood. The view of that event which some persons held was commented upon in another paper as follows : " Interpretations of Providence by the narrow creeds of small-brained bigotry and self-righteous fanaticism are simply contemptible. Indignation is wasted on such sputtering farthing-candles." And yet, if there is any foundation for the theory that God sends such calamities as punishment, why should not every person have had the right to use his reason to seek an interpretation of that particular occasion ? And why should not men do the same thing at every visitation of calamity or misfortune which occurs in the world ? If we object to this in any individual instance, is it not a question if our general theory of Providence accords with the application that we make in special cases ?

The theory was very common among the Jews, that good or bad fortune was a sign of the pleasure or displeasure of God. In the Book of Job, it was very strongly stated by the men who came to reason with Job in his misfortunes. " Remember," they said to him, " who ever perished, being innocent ? or where were the righteous cut off ? . . . They that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." Hence they insisted that it was on account of Job's wickedness that his sufferings

were visited upon him. Job, however, protests against such a theory ; and the conclusion of the book is, that these things are something which we cannot understand.

Jesus found the same theory current in his own time. "Master, who did sin," asked his disciples, "this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" His answer was, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents." And of Galileans whom Pilate had slain, and those on whom the tower of Siloam fell, he said, "Think ye that they were sinners above all others? . . . I tell you, Nay." It seems, therefore, that Jesus did not accept any such theory of special providence as had been common among his people.

It does not seem to require much reflection to convince us of the unreasonableness of such a theory of Divine Providence as encourages men to attempt to explain why every event happens, and for what purpose it was ordained by God. If a man is sailing on Sunday, and is drowned, there are those who will say that his death was a punishment for his violation of the sabbath. But there have been instances of people having been drowned when going to church in boats, that having been the only way in which they could go. Will that theory explain such an accident? Or

will it explain a railroad-collision, or the sinking of an ocean-steamship, where fifty or more persons, good and bad, perish? A few years ago a boat containing two missionaries left Calcutta, and pushed up the Ganges for a distant town, where there was a call for Christian zeal and labor. As they approached the end of their journey, one of them was laid prostrate with a sudden illness. His companion, taking a smaller boat, hastened on to procure medical assistance. Just as he came in sight of the town to which they were both going, two trees, which had been loosened by the wind and the river, fell from the banks, crushing the boat, and burying that noble heart in the waters. Christians thought it a mysterious providence. The heathen thought it a judgment sent by their deity against the intruder. And they had as much reason for their opinion as we have for considering any accident a judgment of God. There have been thousands of such instances, where the good and noble have perished, or suffered some great calamity. Shall we be like the comforters of Job, and say to them, or their surviving friends, that they were punished for some secret sins? Such a decision would only prove our presumption and pride. The best man who lives has no immunity from the working of the laws of nature. He has no right to

expect that he is to ride safely through the world like an exalted Mordecai, with all nature for a Haman, proclaiming, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor." It may be a gratification of our pride, when we escape a great calamity, to attribute our escape to the special care of God ; but how does our theory seem to those who have suffered through the same calamity? On the Sunday after the great fire in Boston, Dr. Manning, whose church (the Old South) just escaped the conflagration, said to his people, "May God grant us open eyes to see the angels who guarded our sanctuary ; and may we feel that the flaming messengers of God's wrath folded their fiery wings, because the Lord said, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther.'" That was doubtless a very satisfactory thought for Dr. Manning and his people. But suppose, that, on his way home from church, Dr. Manning had met Rev. Phillips Brooks, whose church was burned by the same fire. To have been consistent, ought he not to have consoled Mr. Brooks after the manner in which Bildad and others consoled Job, and said to him, "May you feel that the flaming messengers of God's wrath swept over your church, because the Lord said, 'Burn it down ; why cumbereth it the ground'?" Mr. Brooks would have objected to

such a theory of providence, as readily and earnestly as did Job to the theory of his friends. And all such attempts to explain the infliction of suffering, or escape from it, in reality go back of that solution of the problem reached by the author of the Book of Job, — that the whole subject is involved in a mystery which it is useless to try to explain or comprehend.

And all such attempts to explain the ways of Providence, it must be said, are in direct opposition to the theory which Jesus taught, and which seems also to accord best with reason. The words of Jesus were, "He [the Father] maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." That the spirit of these words covers this whole subject of Divine Providence, is plain from the use which Jesus made of them. He was trying to impress upon his hearers the duty of always returning good for evil ; and he mentions two instances of the impartiality of the heavenly Father, and urges men to be perfect in the same way. If it were true that God ever sends earthly calamity, such as flood, fire, sickness, or death, because of evil or injustice, then the argument would be worthless ; for it would then be possible for men sometimes to return evil for evil, and in so doing to manifest the

perfection of the heavenly Father. And all observations of the laws of nature, of the laws which govern rain and sunshine, flood and fire, sickness and death, happiness and good fortune, tend to confirm the theory of Jesus, — that none of these things are sent or withheld on account of any favoritism, or of any want of it, on the part of the heavenly Father. Such experiences cannot be traced to any moral causes, but appear to defy every attempt to so trace them, and to suggest that they have no such cause. Rain and sunshine, flood and fire, sickness and death, joy and sorrow, fall to the lot of man, as Jesus intimated, without any reference to character ; and all the observations of centuries have failed to furnish a particle of proof that these things happen in any other way.

Some one, perhaps, may say such a theory may accord with science ; but does it accord with religion ? Does not such a theory remove God from the world, or at least remove him from man ? What has God to do with man, if all these things happen without any special divine appointment ? This conclusion does not seem to me necessarily to follow, and, according to the teaching of Jesus, it does not follow ; but the heavenly Father's relation to us is manifested in an entirely different

way. "Are not," said Jesus, "two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." As I understand the teaching of Jesus, we are placed here in this world, subject to all these laws, some of them appearing evil and others good, without any intervention on the part of the heavenly Father. But whatever happens to us, whether it bring joy or sorrow, God the heavenly Father is with us, sympathizing with us, both in our joys and in our sorrows. Not a sparrow falls without his notice, and nothing happens to his children without the Father's notice and sympathy. Has the flood or fire destroyed the property which you had saved for future comfort? Has misfortune in any shape overtaken you? Has sorrow entered your home? These trials were not sent as a punishment, or with any moral purpose; but close to your mind and heart, in all your suffering, is the heavenly Father, with his tender love and sympathy. Not one throb of your pain, anguish, or agony, but is known to him. And if human sympathy helps us bear our trials and sorrows, how much more does this divine sympathy of which we are assured?

If it seems difficult to believe that any thing which comes to us, with the mystery, for instance, of sickness and death, does not come as a special appointment, let us remember that there are indeed some things which come to men, which we feel it would be wrong to attribute to a special appointment ; and, if one thing, why not another ? We are placed in this world subject to evil ; that is, it is possible for us to fall into evil, something far worse than sickness or death. Why evil is allowed in the world, and why man was made liable to fall under its control, is a part of that infinite wisdom which it is impossible for us to understand. We can only say that God in his wisdom permits it. But can we go farther, and say, that, when a man falls under the influence of evil, it is by a special appointment of the heavenly Father ? I think every person would shrink from such a view as that. If a father and mother have a son who falls into evil ways, can they for an instant think that the experience has been sent to him or them by a special divine appointment ? It seems to me that in this we can all say with Whittier, —

“The wrong that pains my soul below,
I dare not throne above.”

And if we hesitate in such an instance to attribute that experience to special appointment, why should we not hesitate also in other instances? We are placed here in this world subject to sickness and premature death. This, also, is a part of the infinite wisdom which it is impossible for us to understand. But to go farther than this, and say, that, when sickness or death comes, it comes in each instance by special appointment, I do not think there is any occasion or reason. As Whittier says of wrong, he dare not throne it above, so I believe we may say of suffering and sorrow, I dare not throne them above. Matthew Arnold has said, that what we know about God is that there is a power which makes for righteousness; that is, that man's normal moral life is righteousness. And I believe, further, that it is plain that man's normal natural condition is not one of pain and sorrow, but of pleasure and joy; for God desires the happiness of his children as well as their righteousness; and I see not why we should attribute to him that which destroys the one any more than the other. But what we can attribute to him is his perpetual interest and love. The sparrow falls, but not without the Father. Sorrow may invade the home, but the heavenly Father is there with his love and sympathy. Evil

may invade the home, working changes worse than death ; yet God is there with love and sympathy for those who mourn the change, and with help for the wanderer when he desires to return. Neither evil, pain, nor sorrow let us throne above, but look to that *Eternal Goodness* for love and strength, when these things meet us in our pilgrimage here below. The hairs of our head are numbered. Far more must every throb of pain and sorrow be known to the heavenly Father, and call forth sympathy from him who loves his children with an infinite love.

But there is more even than this. God is not the author of evil, or of pain, or of sorrow, although these call forth his tender love and sympathy. Yet these things, which we cannot attribute to God, we can see are overruled for some higher good than would otherwise be known. The results of evil are pain, regret, and suffering. But when evil has been forsaken, and the soul which has been in bondage to it has, through repentance, found its way back to the Father's home, that soul will experience a joy peculiar to itself alone, coming from a sense of a complete forgiveness. There is a truth in the parable of the two debtors, that he to whom most is forgiven will love most ; and, in the words of Paul, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

In the song of praise which we shall hear in heaven, the tenderest tones will come from those who fell the deepest into sin, but who have experienced the reality and fulness of the divine forgiveness. But the sweetest part of that song will come from those whom death sadly and untimely separated on earth, but who have again met, with the assurance of no future separation. And so, beneath all these mysteries of life, which puzzle us so sorely as we try to understand them, I find an infinite love which infolds the spirit of every child of God, more sensitive to every misfortune and sorrow than is any earthly parent to the griefs of his children. It is a love in which we can trust in the darkest hour, and a sympathy which never fails in sorrow or in joy. We call it "God," "father," "mother," "friend." But put all the sweetest names together, and they do not begin to express the love with which our spirits are surrounded on every side.

XII.

LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP.

"Launch out into the deep." — LUKE v. 4.

THERE are two traits of character which exert a marked influence upon the lives of men. These traits are cautiousness and boldness, or prudence and heroism. The influence of these is often seen very early in life; and it sometimes continues to mould the character, and shape the fortunes, of men and women from the cradle to the grave.

Some children when they take up a new study, and find it rather difficult, are afraid that they never can understand it, and therefore they do not try very hard to do so; and for this reason it is a long time before they understand it well, if, indeed, they ever succeed in doing so. Other children, when they find a study very difficult, say to themselves, "I can learn it if anybody can," and undertake it with a courageous determination that gives them a good knowledge of the subject in a very short time.

The same difference of character is seen in young men as they start out in the business of life. One fears to attempt any thing which he is not absolutely sure will bring him some return : the other starts with the determination to do well ; and, if he fails to do as well as he expected, he applies himself with more energy and hope, and is one of the few who in the end succeed.

And the same difference runs through the lives of men from beginning to end, and is seen in all their business ventures. One is cautious, timid, and excessively prudent : the other is bold, fearless, and heroic ; and the latter wins the greatest and richest success. It cannot be maintained, of course, that there is no place in life for caution and prudence, nor that boldness and heroism are the only traits which minister to success. A certain amount of each of these traits is required in every life. There is a place for caution and also for boldness, a place for prudence as well as for heroism. Without some caution or prudence, life can only be one continued scene of disaster ; while without boldness or heroism, life is only stale and unprofitable. Yet, while both of the traits are necessary, it is doubtless boldness or heroism which requires most encouragement.

The words which Jesus spoke to Simon Peter,

when he wished him to let down his nets into deep water, express well the thought that we need to keep constantly in our minds. Simon, with his friends, had been fishing all night, and had caught nothing ; and his boat was drawn up on the shore, while he sat mending his nets. Jesus entered the boat, and Simon pushed off a little way from the land ; and Jesus sat down and talked with the multitude that had gathered at the water's edge. After he had finished his teaching, he said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." I see no reason why we should suppose that Jesus had some miraculous knowledge of the place in which fishes might be found at that time. It might have been only an opinion, that, at that time of day, a casting of the net would be successful, as it was found to be. Possibly it was simply the opinion of Jesus that they would find fishes in deeper water than where they had been casting their nets. But, whatever may be the true explanation of the words, they express figuratively one important principle of life, which is, not to let fear, timidity, or excessive caution prevent our aiming at the best things in character that can be reached here on earth. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," said Paul to the Christians of his time ; and he would say the same

to us, were he here to-day. Let your ideal of life be high, and then strive earnestly to make it real. Do not waste the precious years in living according to some shallow, common plan of life, but "launch out into the deep," and boldly follow the course which promises the richest returns of character.

We have seen the place for courage and heroism in all business life ; and, when we look at the lives which have achieved the greatest success, we find that it was this element upon which that success principally depended. Mere prudence and caution seldom build up a great fortune. Caution is necessary in every business enterprise, just as it is necessary in the art of war ; but mere caution never made a successful merchant, any more than it ever made a successful soldier. Successful business, as well as successful fighting, is the result of considerable courage and daring. Samuel Smiles says that Hazlitt represents "the business-man as a mean sort of person, put in a go-cart, yoked to a trade or profession." According to Hazlitt, "the great requisite for the prosperous management of ordinary business is the want of imagination, or of any ideas but those of custom and interest on the narrowest scale." But it is impossible to believe that such men ever become the most suc-

cessful merchants. Every merchant-prince must have cut loose from a mere cold prudence and cautiousness, and launched out into the deep of business-life, before his ships returned with golden treasures.

When Columbus set sail from Palos to discover an unknown world, no doubt there were men on the shore, walking to and fro, and calling him fool and madman. They could not understand that even if he failed he would be far superior to them in being willing to launch out upon the unexplored deeps of the ocean, in search of a continent unknown except to his own reason.

Longfellow, in his poem written for the fiftieth anniversary of his class in college, has these lines :—

“Write on your doors the saying wise and old,
‘Be bold! Be bold!’ and everywhere, ‘Be bold:
Be not too bold!’ Yet better the excess
Than the defect; better the more than less;
Better like Hector in the field to die,
Than like a perfumed Paris turn and fly.”

This same boldness, courage, or heroism, which is needed in all secular affairs, is one of the principal elements in every successful Christian life. The Christian life, as we understand it, is not something which is unnatural to man, a plan of life

which it is best for him, on the whole, to adopt : it is something entirely natural, the one only true plan by which true manhood and womanhood can be attained ; it is simply the development and culture of that spark which the Creator has planted in every human being, and which separates us from the brute creation, and allies us with the angels of heaven and with God himself. But there are born with every human being more or less tendencies to evil, like weeds or tares in the garden of life, which tend to smother that divine life, and to make each possessor ignorant of its presence. Then there are temptations which beset every person from without, and on all sides, to neglect that spark of divinity, and to seek pleasure and happiness in something far less worthy. Thus in every life there is a struggle, more or less intense, to see which of these two tendencies in man shall prevail, — that which is divine and heavenly, or that which is earthly and low. The Apostle Paul was right in comparing every true life — call it Christian or any thing else — to a battle, a race, or a strife. It is fighting a fight, running a race, striving for a crown. It is fighting these tendencies within, and temptations without, — all of which do their utmost to overthrow and defeat the divine element in man, and which will

succeed unless he overthrows and defeats them. It is running a race, to see if the divine or the evil shall first reach the goal, and gain the prize of life. It is striving against powers within and without, that we may win and wear the crown of a noble manhood and womanhood.

All of us, therefore, can understand why in every Christian life, in every true life, there must be something more than mere caution, timidity, or prudence, and why there must be boldness, courage, and heroism, or life will be only failure or disaster. Every person who looks beneath the mere surface of life, within and without, sees there elements which must create a strife and a struggle for the mastery; and with most persons in such a strife and struggle, if the best part of man is to be the victor, there must be employed no small amount of determination and heroism.

It is easy to see how the absence of this bold and heroic spirit makes many lives tame, unprofitable, and unsatisfactory. There are many young men and women who have aspirations after a noble life. They have a strong feeling that they would like to make their lives worth something to themselves and to the world. They dislike to think of simply living fifty, sixty, or seventy years, and of then being able only to say that they have had

enough to eat, to drink, and to wear, and that they have received some pleasure from the world, but that they have not used their time in developing and cultivating a noble character, or in leaving behind them a memory which the world will bless long after they have passed from sight. Many young people have such aspirations as these. And yet, why is it that so few begin in early life, and continue through manhood and womanhood, to try earnestly to realize such aspirations, except from a want of sufficient boldness and heroism to enable them to overcome the few obstacles which lie in the way? Perhaps, in early life, they dislike to appear different from their companions; and so they bring their lives down to the common level, and rob them of every ideal except the lowest. Or perhaps they fear that they cannot carry out any noble plan of life, and therefore never try to do so, but simply fall into the rank and file of the many who live only for the moment. Are there not many persons in middle life who can look back and read just such a history as this,—a youth filled with bright aspirations, with “noble longings for the strife,” and yet, from the want of sufficient courage, boldness, and heroism, a life now deprived of nearly every thing bright and noble? Are not the words of Wordsworth true in many lives? —

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"Heaven lies about us in our infancy. . .
Youth by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

And when men and women in middle life see how they have allowed the world, with its business, its labors, and its trials, to override and obscure all that was bright and noble in their youth, is it not too often the case that they still lack sufficient courage and heroism to break away from the control of these low ideals, and resolve that life shall yield them, before it is gone, something noble and grand? They see how it may be done, but they lack the boldness to make of their past "dead selves" "stepping-stones to higher things." They still fear to launch out upon the full tide of a noble life, and to carry the spirit of love, peace, good-will, and forgiveness into all their business and intercourse with men. And this fear is born, more often than from any thing else, from a desire not to appear different from the world. The great majority of men set their ideals low, and they never rise above them; and the influence of the majority keeps down the ideals of those who otherwise would aspire to something higher.

We have in the New Testament glimpses of a

character that may well be contemplated by all of us who hesitate about boldly and heroically launching out upon the deep of a noble life, and trusting to the guidance of the Spirit of God rather than to the spirit of the majority of men. Nicodemus, undoubtedly, saw something in the teaching of Jesus that won his respect and admiration; but, fearing what people might say, he went to inquire further under cover of night. That very act of cowardice indicated that he would not have the courage to be a follower of Jesus, even if his reason should be convinced; and we hear nothing of him among those who followed Jesus or heard him gladly. Near the close of the life of Jesus we hear of Nicodemus uttering in the Sanhedrim a feeble protest against judging the teacher before knowing what he had done, but being silenced with the sneer, "Art thou also of Galilee?" And, after the death of Jesus, we read of his assisting Joseph of Arimathea to prepare the body for the tomb, bringing a hundred pounds of a costly mixture of myrrh and aloes. That life of Nicodemus portrays too well the lives of many men and women of every time,—lives in which we see excessive caution and prudence overriding all courage and heroism, holding them back from consecration in early life, and uttering but a feeble

protest against the lack of worthy aims in middle life ; and in which we see, at the end of life, a dissatisfaction, expressed by a willingness to make any costly sacrifice in order to atone for wasted and unprofitable years. Let us learn from the picture of a life like that the importance of striking out boldly from the low aims and sordid aspirations of the multitude, and following bravely the promptings of our own hearts and consciences ; and we shall find that every life, however humble in outward circumstances, may become in spirit noble and sublime. It is not necessary, in order to do this, to make hermits of ourselves, either literally or figuratively. Let us keep ourselves in and of the world, but let us take our own ideal, and not that of the world or of a majority, and let us endeavor to make a reality of it. Let us resist that power by which the world makes every soul its servant, and compels it to wear its livery. Let us have courage and heroism sufficient to make ourselves freemen by breaking the chains which the world places upon us. The words which one of our poets puts into the mouth of Columbus are as true to-day as ever :—

“O Faith! if thou art strong, thine opposite
Is mighty also; and the dull fool's sneer
Hath ofttimes shot chill palsy through the arm

Just lifted to achieve its crowning deed,
And made the firm-based heart, that would have quailed
The rack or fagot, shudder like a leaf
Wrinkled with frost and loose upon its stem.
The wicked and the weak, by some dark law,
Have a strange power to shut and rivet down
Their own horizon round us, to unwing
Our heaven-aspiring visions, and to blur
With surly clouds the future's gleaming peaks
Far seen across the brine of thankless years."

A large ship, with masts and spars and sails complete, is a noble sight; but the sight seems especially noble when we think of those sails as intended to be spread out to catch the breezes of heaven to waft the ship out over the deep on some voyage of discovery or trade, and to bring her back laden with a rich cargo from distant parts of the earth. But some day we behold an entirely different looking ship sailing into the harbor, weather-beaten and worn, with part of a mast gone, spars broken, and sails torn, yet bringing home a full cargo of the products of distant countries; and we say that is the nobler sight, for she has fulfilled her mission. Yet a nobler thing than any ship is a human soul in a human form, with all its varied powers of sense and muscle and brain at its command. No wonder that some nations pictured their gods after the form in which

it is enshrined. But we have a true idea of the nobility of a human soul, not when we think merely of what it is in itself, but when we think also of what it may achieve. Let it neglect its golden opportunities, and waste its precious time, and remain like a ship fastened to the wharf or anchored in the harbor, with no attempt to make full use of its powers, and it is deprived of nearly every means of awakening noble thoughts. Look at some man or woman who has been out in the world, resisting temptation, struggling with evil, and striving after the crown of a noble manhood or womanhood; and although the form may be bent, and the eye and ear dull, there you have the noblest sight in this world, for it is a noble object with a noble mission well fulfilled.

Do not go away to-day and say of this sermon, that it is all very fine in theory, but that there is nothing practical in it; for never can you make a greater mistake. There is no more practical thought connected with religion or life than this which I have been trying to illustrate. There is not one of us here, who has advanced a little way in life, but will be conscious, if he will only think of it, of noble thoughts, aspirations, and hopes which he or she has never realized, and has never realized principally because of an excess of caution

and prudence, and a want of true courage and heroism. Let us think earnestly of this, and we shall find it one of the most practical thoughts with which we are familiar. And may we all resolve to launch out into the deep of a true and noble life, with our highest ideal for a pilot, and find something of the joy and satisfaction which such a life affords!

XIII.

GOD THE GOD OF THE LIVING.

"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."—
MATT. xxii. 32.

WHEN the Sadducees questioned Jesus about the resurrection of the dead, in which they did not believe, he referred them to one of their sacred books, where God was represented as saying to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This, Jesus held, involved the truth of the resurrection, for it was spoken long after those persons had died ; and if God was still their God, they must have then been living ; for God cannot be a God of dead persons, but only of the living.

The question, Can God be a God of dead persons ? is of interest to us all. How great is the number of those, of whom we speak and think as the dead, who are dead only so far as this world is concerned, but living somewhere ! Every one of us can think of relatives and friends who have passed from our sight, whom we call our dead,

but thoughts of whom are as real and as frequent as thoughts of many of those who are still visible to our eyes. And, besides these, how great is the number of those who have rendered the human race some special service! — the men who have made discoveries which have been perpetual blessings, the men who by their works have enriched our intellectual life, the men who by their faith have deepened and strengthened our spiritual life, the martyrs who have died in attestation of the truth which they believed. If God is the God of the dead, then all these, who still seem to the world almost as real as any who are on the earth to-day, are only dust ; and, if God is the God of the dead, then those who are on the earth with us to-day, and we ourselves, will in a few years be only dust. We who seek for, look up to, and cry out for, the living God shall soon be only a few handfuls of dust, unconscious of the living God, or even of ourselves. It is a question of interest to us, whether any beings who are able to know God, so that they can say “my God,” and can feel that they are his, will ever be his, except as the dust of the earth is his. Is God the God of the living, of those who shall live forever, or of those who are destined to annihilation ?

"Can a finite thing, created in the bounds of time and space,
Can it live and grow and love thee, catch the glory of thy
face,
Fade and die, be gone forever, know no being, have no
place?"

It may be asked by some, Why bring up such a question for consideration, when we believe that we all are destined to live forever? I answer, Not because it is necessary for us to open the whole subject upon which our minds feel settled, but because it is a question of perpetual interest, and probably never will, and never can, be banished from the mind. So mysterious is the mystery of death and the future life, that there will always be more or less discussion about it. Every discovery and every advance which is made by the human mind will always be questioned as to its bearing upon this subject. And therefore, while we do not feel under the necessity of solving this whole question for ourselves anew, still there are, at the present day, currents of thought which flow in this direction, which we can hardly avoid noticing.

The source of all new thoughts about this subject is in that branch of human knowledge which is now uppermost in the minds of men, — science. In some of the later investigations of the material

world, there are some facts and some speculations which seem, to a few persons, arguments against any future existence of the human soul. These thoughts and theories are floating about in the papers and in books, and it seems almost necessary to notice them in the places which are devoted to the teaching of the principles of Christianity: one of these is that of immortality.

One of the noted writers of our time begins a poem with these words:—

“ Oh! may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence—live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self,
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge man's search
To vaster issues. So to live is heaven.”

From this idea of heaven all thought of personal existence is gone; the only life looked forward to being that of an influence for good in the minds of those who continue to live upon the earth.

But, because a few persons are ready to jump at such a conclusion as this, it must not be thought

that it is warranted by any of the facts of science. The truth is, that science furnishes no argument whatever on either side of the question. To prove that this is so, I will not enter into any presentation of the teachings of science, but will state the conclusion to which one of the coldest logicians of this age, and one not over-inclined to a belief in immortality, has arrived. John Stuart Mill says, —

“There is in science no evidence against the immortality of the soul, but that negative evidence which consists in the absence of evidence in its favor; and even the negative evidence is not so strong as negative evidence often is. In the case of witchcraft, for instance, the fact that there is no proof which will stand examination of its having ever existed is as conclusive as the most positive evidence of its non-existence would be; for it exists, if it does exist, on this earth, where, if it had existed, the evidence of fact would certainly have been available to prove it. But it is not so as to the soul's existence after death. That it does not remain on earth, and go about visibly, or interfere in the events of life, is proved by the same weight of evidence which disproves witchcraft; but that it does not exist elsewhere, there is absolutely no proof. A very faint, if any, presumption is all that is afforded by its disappearance from the planet.”

That is the calm estimate of the bearing of science on this subject, by a man who was as able to make such an estimate as any person on earth,

and who had no prejudices in favor of the doctrine of immortality. According to him, there is in science no evidence whatever against the immortality of the soul; and the statement of such a man is of more value than the thoughts and theories and speculations of a hundred less able thinkers. Besides that statement, Mr. Mill also made the following:—

“Some may think that there is an additional and very strong presumption against the immortality of the thinking and conscious principle, from the analysis of all the other objects of nature. All things in nature perish; the most beautiful and perfect being, as philosophers and poets alike complain, the most perishable. A flower of the most exquisite form and coloring grows up from a root, comes to perfection in weeks or months, and lasts only a few hours or days. Why should it be otherwise with man? Why, indeed? But why, also, should it *not* be otherwise? Feeling and thought are not merely different from what we call inanimate matter, but are at the opposite pole of existence; and analogical inference has little or no validity from the one to the other.”

Notwithstanding, therefore, what a few poets may write, or the speculations in which a few scientific men may indulge, it may be taken for granted that science furnishes no proof, either one way or the other, in regard to the future existence of the soul.

“The only verdict [it is said] which can be wrung from science is, that the cessation of all conscious being at death is ‘not proven.’ She remains neutral, even when she forbears to utter oracles of despair. Nay, rather is she no prophetess at all, but may better be likened to some gaunt sign-post beside the highway of life, pointing with one wooden arm to the desolate waste, and with the other to fair fields and fresh pastures, but giving no response to our cry of anguish, Whither have our beloved ones gone?”

As we may, therefore, safely rest assured that science makes no answer to this great question of life, let us turn to the thought of the Saviour, and see what it contains: “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” The Saviour uses these words as if the thought that God can be the God of the dead is impossible. We can think of God only as the God of the living. And one reason why this thought is impossible is because, if God loves a human being, God’s happiness, and therefore his perfection, would be impaired by the annihilation of that being. This argument has been beautifully stated by an English writer, who, after describing our pain at the loss of a friend, says, —

“But if Virtue grieves thus for lost virtue justly,
How then must God, the fountain of virtue, feel?
If our highest feelings, and the feelings of all the holy,

Guide rightly to the divine heart, then it would grieve
likewise,
And grieve eternally, if goodness perish eternally.
Nay, and as a man who should live ten thousand years,
Sustained miraculously amid perishing generations,
Would sorrow perpetually in the perpetual loss of friends,
Even so, some might judge, the divine heart likewise
Would stint its affections towards the creatures of a day.
Would it not be a yawning gulf of ever-increasing sorrow,
Losing every loved one, just when virtue was ripening,
And foreseeing perpetual loss, friend after friend, forever,
So that all training perishes, and has to be begun anew,
Winning new souls to virtue, to be lost as soon as won?
If, then, we must not doubt that the Highest has deep love
for the holy,
Such love as man has for man in pure and sacred friendship,
We seem justly to infer that those whom God loves are
deathless;
Else would the divine blessedness be imperfect and im-
paired.
In short, close friendship between the Eternal and the per-
ishing
Appears unseemly to the nature of the Eternal,
Whom it befits to keep his beloved, or not to love at all.
But to say God loveth no man, is to make religion vain:
Hence it is judged that ' whatsoever God loveth liveth with
God.' "

I see not how we can avoid such a thought as
this: if God has any love for his children, and has
the power to continue their existence forever, then

he will, he must, do so ; and thus we come again to the conclusion, that " God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Another thought leading to the same conclusion occurred to me, a few days ago, while reading an article on science. Scientific men tell us that the earth is gradually growing cooler, and that probably, in the course of time, it will become too cold for the support of human life. If that is true of the earth, there is no reason why it may not be of all the other planets which compose our system of worlds ; and, if true of our system of worlds, it is probably true of all other systems, or of the whole universe : so that this wave of human life may pass over one system of worlds after another, leaving them as they were before life appeared, till at last, if there is no other state of existence than this, the whole universe will be devoid of life, the worlds will be only revolving sepulchres, there will be not a voice to rise above the everlasting silence in words of praise, not a soul to be drawn upward in aspiration. God will be alone, reigning in one vast cemetery filled with the dust of extinct generations, truly a God of the dead. At such a possibility the mind revolts ; for sooner can it believe there is no God, than that he has arranged for such a result.

The decision of those, therefore, who are least prejudiced in either way is, that science finds no argument whatever against the doctrine of immortality ; and also, as we have seen, the thought that God is the God of dead persons is unreasonable in the extreme, and opposed to all our ideas of the Infinite Being. Therefore, there is as much reason now as there was in the time of the Saviour why we should say that "God is not the God of the dead," and also why we should say, "God is the God of the living." If we ask what is included in the thought that God is the God of the living, we must answer, that one meaning which is found therein is that those of our friends who have passed away from our mortal sight are still living. God has not suffered our loved ones to see corruption. And, furthermore, we must think of them as living as truly and fully as they lived here upon earth. We know how hard it is to prevent the last scenes, connected with the passing away of our friends, from having a depressing influence upon our subsequent thoughts of them. When we lay the sacred dust away in the grave, when we miss their presence in our homes, and when the thought that we shall see them no more upon earth presses heavier and heavier upon the heart, it sometimes seems hard to think of them

as living as they lived here. But God is not the God of the dead. That dust which we laid away is no more to him than the dust of the earth ; the beauty of that earthly form, no more than the beauty of the flower. God was God of the spirit which dwelt in that form : he is God still of that same spirit ; and therefore they must live as truly as they lived here. They are not deprived of any faculties or of any powers which make their life less full and less complete than when they dwelt upon the earth ; and probably they have other powers bestowed upon them, or unfolded from their own nature, by which they live more truly and more fully than ever before. Let us grasp the thought in all its breadth and height : "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." "A most noteworthy saying," says Dr. Hedge : "the world of past generations is not a charnel-house, or world of dust, but a world of life and thought, of energy and love. The Spirit of God strikes through it, and infolds it, no less than our human world of to-day."

And if God is the God of the living, then also, in the hereafter, we shall live. It has been said that "not one man in a thousand lives as if he expected immortality, or resigned himself to annihilation. The sentiments we entertain towards God

are not such as might befit an insect towards him who is preparing to crush it, but neither are they those of sons to a Father into whose home on high we are assured ere long of a welcome." I think that one reason of this is, that we fail to realize fully the fact that *we* are to live in the future; that is, we do not realize that we are to be in the future the same thinking, hoping, and loving beings that we are here. We look forward to death as if it were to be a break in our real life. We expect to preserve our personal identity; but we think of ourselves as so changed, in that future state, that the influences which bear on our lives now will not extend to that world, except in the most general way. But I believe that death will work no change in these spirits of ours, which are the only part of us that can be truly called living. The outward world, every thing external to the spirit, will be changed; but they will still be the same living beings which they were here. Our life is like a river flowing from one state into another: death is merely the dividing-line, across which the current of life flows, entering upon new scenes; but the river is the same. There will be no break in the current of our thought. It will flow across that boundary, and we shall find ourselves the same thinking beings that we are here.

Our living selves will not be changed. If death should come to-day, we should find ourselves in the other world with the same thoughts, feelings, and desires which we have here. God is the God of the living. He will be the same then as now ; and so shall we, the living, be the same. Therefore let us remember that the good or evil which we are cherishing now will be with us then. It is this very self, with this same consciousness, that is to exist in the future ; and that is what is meant by "*we shall live in the future.*"

Since we last celebrated this festival of Easter, some of our number, of different ages, have passed on to the other shore. Some have left us, who, from week to week, for many years, have entered these courts, and offered their praise to God. Others have passed on, who, in the full strength of their manhood and womanhood, were wont to meet here, and consecrate that strength to the heavenly Father. One went away who had been accustomed to come hither for a blessing on the days of her youth, and one whose only visit was to receive the water of consecration upon his brow. To those from whose homes they went forth, and to those who remember others who in years gone by came hither with them to worship, but who have now passed from sight, how full of the mem-

ory of them must this house seem ! Here you feel that —

“The spirit-world around this world of sense
Floats like an atmosphere, and everywhere
Wafts through these earthly mists and vapors dense
A vital breath of more ethereal air.”

Let us as we come here, where, with our praises and our prayers, are mingled thoughts of those who have been with us in times past, endeavor to realize more and more that God is the God of the living, and therefore that there is more than their dust, and more than their memory, remaining. They live unto Him and in Him whom we meet here to worship. His eye beholds them bowing before his heavenly throne, at the same time that it beholds us gathered around his earthly throne. His ear listens to their praises and aspirations, at the same time that it listens to ours. And, although a veil separates them from us, their God is our God ; in him they and we live, and therefore we cannot be far apart. Let us learn to think of them, not in connection with the sadness of their parting, but as sharing that life of the heavenly Father which he imparts to all. With every thought of them as lost, let us hear the words of that resurrection morn : “ Why seek ye the living among the dead ? He is not here, but is risen.”

XIV.

THE COMING OF THE COMFORTER.

"If I go not away, the Comforter [Helper] will not come unto you." — JOHN xvi. 7.

THERE is nothing in the whole life of Jesus more beautiful, touching, and tender, than the conversation which he had with his disciples, only a few days before his crucifixion, concerning his death, or his going away from them. We can readily understand why every allusion to this was such a cause of grief to the disciples. The hopes which had gathered around their thoughts of him, that he was the long expected Messiah who was to restore the former glory to their nation, and who was to bestow upon them exceeding great rewards in the re-organized kingdom, added to their personal attachment to him, made the thought of his leaving them one of the most bitter that could occupy their minds. And Jesus, knowing all their thoughts, and knowing also the impossibility of their understanding all the mysteries concerning that kingdom of truth and right-

eousness which he came to establish, speaks to them in the kindest possible way, to assure them that whatever would happen would, in some way, be for the best. He tells them that he is going to prepare a place for them, and that he is coming again to take them thither. He assures them that, if he goes away, something will come which will do more for them than he has done ; and that if he does not go away, this divine Comforter, or Helper, will not come. Although they could not then understand all that he said about this, they nevertheless could understand that, in some way, they were to be great gainers by that which was to come to pass. What promise could be greater than this which he made to them ? "It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Helper will not come ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."

The meaning of Jesus in the teaching that it was necessary for him to go away from the earth, that the Helper, or Spirit of truth, might come and lead them into all truth, seems to have been, that, so long as he remained on the earth, the disciples entirely misunderstood him. They were expecting the establishment of an outward kingdom, with its array of officers and rulers with

whom they were to find a place. They were at strife among themselves about who should have the highest place in that kingdom which they supposed Jesus was to establish, with himself at the head. There was nothing of that kind in the mind of Jesus ; but, so long as he was with the disciples on the earth, it was impossible for him to convince them of their mistake. Nothing that he could say of his going away, or of his death, could make them believe that he was not intending to set up a kingdom similar to that over which Solomon or David ruled. Only after his death could that dream be broken up, and they be led to see that it was no worldly kingdom, but a kingdom in the hearts of men, that Jesus was endeavoring to establish. Only his death could make them understand the real meaning of his teachings, that what he was trying to inculcate was peace and love and good-will among men ; that, instead of trying to unite men in some powerful kingdom, he was trying to make each man pure and true and loving. Only after his death could they be assured that his kingdom was to be set up in the hearts of men, and not in any outward form of government. After his death the memory of him would be a helper, a spirit of truth, leading them, and those who should succeed them, into higher and higher ideals of truth.

And this we know is just what happened. Look at the disciples a little while after the death of Jesus, and compare them with what they were before, and they appear as different as if they had awakened from a dream. They then began to realize what the teaching of Jesus really meant, and to teach the truths which they had learned from him. The thought of Jesus, and the memory of him who had gone from earth, had done for them what his presence could not do.

This change which took place in the disciples of Jesus, as the result of his going away from the earth, important and interesting as it is of itself, is still more important and interesting from the fact that it enables us to see the influence and importance of similar changes which are constantly going on around us.

Probably there is no other question which has exercised the minds of men so much as this: Why was death permitted to enter the world? Many times, perhaps, almost all of us have thought what an improvement in the arrangement of this world it would have been, had there been no such thing as death, or if it had been confined to the age of fourscore or one hundred years. It would seem to us to be a far better plan, if every human being could have assured to him a certain number of

years, eighty, ninety, or a hundred, and be free from all fears of death until that time should arrive. It is impossible to imagine, as we think, the amount of sorrow that the world would have been spared, had there been such an arrangement as this. But now how different is it in the midst of all this uncertainty! She who to-day, with a mother's joy, clasps her new-born babe to her breast, knows not but that to-morrow it may be cold in death. If it lives one year, there is no assurance of its living another. The young husband and wife know not how soon one may be taken away, leaving the new-made home desolate. They who have lived until the noon of life cannot see how short is the distance beyond which their paths on earth may separate forever; and they who have arrived at riper years know that the time during which they will remain together here cannot be long, but just how long they cannot tell. How true it is —

“Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north-wind's breath,
And stars to set; but thou,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!”

And what a truthful picture of sorrow has Bryant drawn, as he looks back at the love-tokens strewn on the surface of that silent flood of years! —

"I look, and the quick tears are in my eyes :
For I behold in every one of these
A blighted hope, a separate history
Of human sorrows,—telling of dear ties
Suddenly broken, dreams of happiness
Dissolved in air, and happy days too brief,
That sorrowfully ended; and I think
How painfully must the poor heart have beat
In bosoms without number, as the blow
Was struck that slew their hope and broke their peace!"

Seeing all this sorrow which exists as the result of death, it is not strange that men have been so ready to ask, Could not the world have been arranged better without death, or at least without the uncertainty attending it? And, indeed, the answer which has been most satisfactory to men is really no answer at all, which is, to let the problem rest in faith, trusting that He who created the world, and who placed his children in it, has, in his inscrutable wisdom, ordained that death should reign, with all its accompanying sorrow, for some good purpose which we are unable to understand.

And yet, in this age of questioning, it is hardly possible for many to resist returning again and again to the problem, hoping to find some additional light. I know it is represented as impossible for persons in the midst of sorrow to see or to

feel that any possible good will be the result. Tennyson says, —

“ But who shall so forecast the years,
And find in loss a gain to match?
Or reach a hand through time to catch
The far-off interest of tears? ”

Doubtless it is true that it is difficult or impossible for individuals to look forward and see how the sorrow, which seems to be crushing them to the earth, is ever to result in any good ; but may there not be some light thrown on the whole subject from what Jesus taught, and from what the Spirit is ever teaching? And I think that what Jesus said to his disciples about his own death, or going away, may help us to understand a little of this mystery which seems at first so impenetrable to our thought.

Jesus told his disciples that it was best for them that he should go away : for unless he did the Helper would not come to them ; and if he did the Helper, or Spirit of truth, would come to them, and lead them into all truth, and would do for them far more than he could do himself while on the earth. This Helper, or Spirit of truth, was really the spirit which was in him, or the memory of his life. When he was removed from the sight of his disciples, they understood better the real mean-

ing of his life and teachings. All their hopes of a worldly kingdom were overthrown, and the spirit of his life continually led them into more and more of the truth. There was very little like the Master in the characters of his disciples until he had left them. The influence which he exercised over them when he was out of their sight was far greater than when he was with them.

And is not this true now of our friends who go away from us to the other world? Near as they may be to us while on the earth, is not their real spiritual influence increased by their departure? Does not the memory of friends who have passed into the other world have a greater religious influence upon us than the lives of those who are still with us here? And is not what Shakspeare says of the death of friends always true of real friends?

“The idea of their lives shall sweetly creep
Into our study of imagination;
And every lovely organ of their lives
Shall come apparelled in more precious habit,
More moving, delicate, and full of life,
Into the eye and prospect of our souls,
Than when they lived indeed.”

How many, for instance, of those of us who are here to-day have an influence working upon our lives which reaches out from the unseen world, and

comes from the memory of those who were once with us here on earth, but who have passed within the mysterious veil ! Indeed, how large a part of what is best and truest and noblest in our lives is in some way connected with them ! We think of them not only as they were while here with us, but as they must have grown since they went away ; and their lives, not merely as they were here, but with all that we can imagine them to have gained while in the other world, draw us up into nobler and sweeter manhood and womanhood than they did while on the earth. There may be those whose hearts are not softened, and whose characters are not in a certain degree purified, by sorrow, but they are the exceptions. As a general thing, sorrow draws all men up to a purer and nobler life.

An aged abbot on the day of his death was asked by a monk, if, when he was with the Lord, he would remember his disciples, and pray for them. He looked upon them and said, "So order your conduct that I may have courage to pray for you, and I will do what you require." Is there not a feeling, common among all who have friends on the other side of the river, of a desire so to live here that they who have gone away may rejoice in our well-doing?

The author of the letter to the Hebrews speaks of the influence which the memory of all the great and good of that nation ought to exert upon the living. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Does not every thoughtful person now realize that there is a great cloud of witnesses, in whose presence the race on earth is run, and that among those witnesses there are many whose voices have been stilled but for a little time? How much of our patience, our energy, and our endurance has its inspiration in the memory of those whom we have known on earth, but who have gone before! And it is for these reasons that I think we may get at least a glimpse of the wisdom which ordered these things so differently from what we should have ordered them. While it is impossible for any one to point to this family or that family, to this person or that person, and say, it is best for them that the beloved child, brother or sister, father or mother, husband or wife, should be taken, yet, looked at as a whole, I believe it is not impossible for us to see something of the divine wisdom in the ways of God.

And, besides this, it is plain that the amount of love and good-will which is possible here on earth is increased many fold by this uncertainty of life, occasioned by the possibility of death. No one knows when the moment of separation between him and those whom he loves may come, and from this uncertainty arises a thoughtfulness and tenderness which otherwise would be unknown. James Martineau says of this: "Let there be no arrow by night, no malady by day, let the three-score years and ten be assured to the last hour, and the eyes fall punctually asleep with the setting sun entered on the calendar; and would any thing tender and divine hang around this death by the clock? If we are faithful to one another in our onward march, it is because there is not one who may not fall: our road lies through a perpetual ambush, and whoever has a friend to keep step with him on the way will try to place him on the sheltered side. Unless all *character* is to perish, the contingencies must stay. The tacit mutual dependence, the secret suspicion that here or there the ground which looks so solid is undermined, the constant possibility of a total change of parts in the drama of our life, and so the silent wonder that mingles with every scene, — these are the freshening powers breathing on what else

were common or unclean, and meeting and startling us like angels encountered in the street. Whatever depth there may be in our poor love, whatever reverence speaks in our rough voice, flows into us from that world unseen."

And yet, for all this, death is represented in the Bible as an evil and as an enemy. The last enemy that Christ is to destroy, says Paul, is death. And of that better world John wrote, "There shall be no more death." Why should it be abolished or destroyed if any good flows from it? The answer must be, that it will not be destroyed so long as there is any need of its influence. In that other world there will be different surroundings, different influences, by which we shall be able to progress in the better life without the need of these afflictions and sorrows that belong to this world. In the mean time, let us not only accept these lessons which affliction brings to us here, but let us try so to live, that, when we are gone, our memory may be a helper in the better life of all those who shall miss us from our accustomed places.

FUNERAL SERVICES,
AND TRIBUTES OF PERSONAL RESPECT.

FUNERAL SERVICES.

From THE MELROSE JOURNAL.

THE funeral service of Mr. Westcott occurred on Tuesday, at the Unitarian church, and was very largely attended. The body of the church was occupied by delegations from the Lexington church, of which Mr. Westcott was formerly pastor, and from the Malden church, of which he was the present pastor. The churches of the town were represented by their pastors, Rev. Richard Eddy, D.D. (Universalist), Rev. A. G. Bale (Congregational), Rev. C. L. Short (Episcopal), Rev. R. F. Tolman (Baptist), and Rev. J. D. Pickles (Methodist); and the Unitarian clergy by Professor E. J. Young, Rev. F. B. Hornbrooke of Newton, Rev. W. C. Savary of Canton, Rev. L. J. Livermore, and many others. Rev. D. P. Livermore, Rev. Clifton Fletcher, Mrs. Mary A. Livermore, and other prominent citizens, were present, and friends from other parts of the State who had been associated with Mr. Westcott in the past. The pulpit was draped in mourning, arranged by ladies in the parish, who were assisted in this and the floral decoration by Mr. Justus Geist. The family service at the house was

conducted by Rev. N. Seaver, Jun., of Scituate ; and the body was then followed to the church, where the service was opened at two o'clock by an invocation by Rev. Richard Eddy, D.D., of the Universalist Church. A quartette, consisting of Messrs. J. O. Norris, J. G. Bowden, Misses E. Leora Hardy and Lizzie G. Lecraw, sang "God giveth Quietness at Last ;" Mrs. G. N. Bordman officiating at the organ.

GOD GIVETH QUIETNESS AT LAST.

"God giveth quietness at last.
The common way once more is passed,
From pleading tears, and lingerings fond,
To fuller life and love beyond.

Fold the rapt soul in your embrace,
Dear ones familiar with the place ;
While, to the gentle greetings there,
We answer here with murmured prayer.

What to shut eyes hath God revealed?
What hear the ears that death has sealed?
What undreamed beauty, passing show,
Requites the loss of all we know?

O silent land to which we move !
Enough, if there alone be love,
And mortal need can ne'er outgrow
What it is waiting to bestow.

O pure soul! from that far-off shore
Float some sweet song the waters o'er:
Our faith confirm, our fears dispel,
With the dear voice we loved so well."

Rev. H. C. DeLong of Medford then read the following selections:—

"The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto him, Thy God reigneth."

"For he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

"The memorial of virtue is immortal, for it is known of God and of men. When it is present mankind take example of it, and when it is gone they desire it. It weareth a crown, and triumpheth forever, having gotten the victory, striving for undefiled rewards."

"The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

"Yea, blessed is the memory of the just: their bodies are

buried in peace ; but their name liveth forevermore. The people will tell of their wisdom, and the congregation will show forth their praise."

"Oh, may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence !
 May I reach
That purest heaven,—be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty,
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion evermore intense :
So shall I join the choir invisible,
Whose music is the gladness of the world."

"It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For God created man to be immortal, and made him in the image of his own eternity."

"Climbing the mountain's shaggy crest,
 I wondered much what sight would greet
 My eager gaze whene'er my feet
Upon the topmost height should rest.

The other side was all unknown;
But, as I slowly toiled along,
Sweeter to me than any song
My dream of visions to be shown.

At length the topmost height was gained,
The other side was full in view:
My dreams, — not one of them was true,
But better far had I attained.

For far and wide on either hand
There stretched a valley broad and fair,
With greenness flashing everywhere, —
A pleasant, smiling, home-like land.

Who knows, I thought, but so 'twill prove
Upon that mountain-top of death,
Where we shall draw diviner breath,
And see the long-lost friends we love?

It may not be as we have dreamed,
Not half so awful, strange, and grand:
A quiet, peaceful, home-like land,
Better than e'er in vision gleamed."

The quartette then sang, —

"So Heaven is gathering, one by one,
In its capacious breast,
All that is pure and permanent,
And beautiful and blest.

The family is scattered yet,
Though of one home and heart:
Part militant in earthly gloom,
In heavenly glory part.

But who can speak the rapture when
The number is complete,
And all the children sundered now
Around one Father meet?

One fold, one Shepherd, one employ,
One everlasting home,—
Our Father's house, from whose dear rest
No wanderer e'er shall roam."

Rev. Grindall Reynolds of Concord pronounced the funeral eulogy, speaking as a former neighbor, co-worker in the ministry, and as a warm personal friend. The character of the deceased, he said, was a singularly pure and stainless one. The chief element in it was faithfulness. He was faithful to the highest ideal of a Christian minister, entering the pulpit each Sunday as if he had a solemn message to proclaim to his people of the demands made upon them from God to be true to the building up of their better selves. He was a true and consecrated pastor as well; bearing to the homes in the parish, in hours of trial and trouble, the messages of comfort from above. He was true to the young; and they all loved him who walked as a child among them, and bore an equal share in their joys and pleasures. He was always

loyal to the truth, and followed its convictions at whatever sacrifice of personal comfort. He was pre-eminently a good man, and left behind him an example worthy of all imitation, and an influence which would never cease to ennoble the lives of those who love and mourn him. Mr. Reynolds closed with earnest words of hope to the family of his departed brother, and of exhortation to the members of the Melrose and Malden parishes who are now left without a pastor, and to the brethren in the ministry to be as faithful soldiers in this great warfare as Mr. Westcott had been.

Rev. B. H. Bailey of Marblehead, a classmate of the deceased at the Divinity School, spoke of his studious habits, his strong love of the cause of righteousness, and his always-present convictions of duty, which led him to follow his Master so earnestly that he could always say, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He tenderly portrayed his quiet passing away amid the scenes of nature he loved so well, gazing upon the beautiful sunset, and then in one moment translated into the far greater glories of the hereafter, — one Sunday ministering to his beloved people, and the next ministering with the angels. He read, in closing, the beautiful poem,

HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP.

"He sees when their footsteps falter, when their hearts
grow weak and faint;
He marks when their strength is failing, and listens to
each complaint:

He bids them rest for a season, for the pathway has grown
too steep;
And, folded in fair, green pastures, He giveth His loved
ones sleep.

Like weary and worn-out children, that sigh for the day-
light's close,
He knows that they oft are longing for home and its sweet
repose:
So he calls them in from their labors, ere the shadows
around them creep;
And, silently watching o'er them, He giveth His loved ones
sleep.

He giveth it, oh! so gently, as a mother will hush to rest
The babe that she softly pillows so tenderly on her breast:
Forgotten are now the trials and sorrows that made them
weep;
For, with many a soothing promise, He giveth His loved
ones sleep.

All dread of the distant future, all fears that oppressed
to-day,
Like mists that clear in the sunlight, have noiselessly passed
away:
Nor call, nor clamor, can rouse them from slumbers so pure
and deep;
For only His voice can reach them who giveth His loved
ones sleep.

Weep not that their toils are over, weep not that their race
is run:
God grant we may rest as calmly when our work, like theirs,
is done!

Till then, we would yield with gladness our treasures to
Him to keep,
And rejoice in the sweet assurance, He giveth His loved
ones sleep."

Rev. H. H. Barber of Somerville offered prayer, the quartette sang a closing anthem, and the benediction was pronounced by Mr. Reynolds. The remains were interred at Mount-Auburn Cemetery, the following gentlemen acting as pall-bearers: Rev. N. Seaver, Jun., and Rev. C. A. Staples of Lexington, of the Unitarian clergy; Messrs. W. F. Conant and George C. Stantial of the Melrose parish, and N. W. Starbird and S. C. Jones of the Malden parish. At Mount Auburn "The Sweet By and By" was sung, and a beautiful burial-service recited by Rev. Mr. Barber, closing with these verses, —

"Brother, rest from sin and sorrow:
Death is o'er, and life is won.
On thy slumbers breaks no morrow:
Rest, thine earthly work is done.

Brother, wake: the night is waning,
Endless day is round thee poured;
Enter thou the rest remaining
For the people of the Lord.

Fare thee well; though grief is blending
With the tones of human love,
Triumph high and joy unending
Wait thee in the realm above."

The floral offerings were very elegant, and consisted, among the public ones, of a floral anchor, with the letters "Asleep in Jesus" upon it, from members of the Lexington parish; a broken harp from the Malden church, a cross from the Roundabout Club of Melrose; and a book of white pinks, with rose borderings, and the word "Faith" traced across it, from the Melrose church. The exercises were in charge of Mr. J. O. Norris. Mr. Westcott was greatly beloved by his people of both parishes, and their grief at this sad calamity to them is very great and universal.

From THE CHRISTIAN REGISTER, July 26, 1883.

The little church at Melrose was filled by those who wished to pay their tribute of respect and affection to the memory of a good man and faithful worker. Men and women came, not only from the parishes recently under his charge, but from a distance, to look once more into the face of one whose kindly and earnest ministry they remembered with gratitude. Such a tribute was deserved. Mr. Westcott was, in an emphatic sense, a good parish minister. He felt that a parish furnished ample field for the exercise of all the strength, all the mental vigor, all the affections, and all the moral sympathies, of the most richly endowed nature. His preaching was not simply intellectual effort, or an attempt to solve subtle theological problems. That was all away from his con-

ception. He honestly sought, from week to week, to bring the bread of life to the hearts and consciences of his hearers, — something which should guide them, strengthen them, comfort them, and so make them fulfil better the great ends of life. He did not, as so many do, forget the value of the personal relations. He was a genuine pastor; knowing his people, caring for them, making their joys and sorrows his own, to the end that he might lift them up to a higher life and a more assured peace. He was not forgetful of the young, but sought, with a zeal worthy of our emulation, to get close to them, to understand them, and so to be in a position in which they would gladly accept him as a friend and counsellor.

Mr. Westcott was a man of sound and trustworthy mental qualities, which had been enriched and ripened by a good culture. To these were added that best quality, — fidelity to his chosen vocation. He was thoroughly consecrated to his work. And consecration, in the face of ever increasing physical weakness, meant in his case genuine heroism; and he did his best work, and said his noblest word, just when flesh and blood were utterly failing him, and the shadows were, all unseen by him, cast across his path. One would gladly emphasize his great loyalty to the truth, which would not permit him to blur moral distinctions, which prompted him to say what seemed to him the needful, even if unpopular truth. No man was ever less a slave to the opinions of the majority.

In personal relations, on first acquaintance he was reti-

cent and seemingly cold ; but, when that acquaintance ripened into friendship, you found him faithful, frank of speech, affectionate, and full of sympathies. Beautiful was his departure. Resting a while from labor, by the sounding sea, at eventide he gazed out upon the tranquil beauty of sky and wave ; and as he gazed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, he passed from earth's sunset to the immortal sunrise.

*From THE UNITARIAN REVIEW AND RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE,
September, 1883.*

Rev. Henry Westcott began his work of twenty-three years in the ministry at Barre, Mass., was for fourteen years pastor in Lexington, and at his death had lately taken charge of the churches in Melrose and Malden. Burdened with much sickness, he was always cheerful and hopeful. He took up the minister's work courageously, and for life, and pursued it, under all difficulties, heartily and hopefully to the end. His faithful pastoral work, his interest in the children of his charge, his sincere and manful discharge of the preacher's office, won high esteem and regard ; and the affection which the true minister never lacks gathered a large company of real mourners around his bier. He had a voice of manly and independent tone in our conferences, always jealous for the truth on the side less defended. He was a faithful, kindly minister, loving his work, believing in it,

and living in it and in his pleasant home an exemplary, energetic, and studious life, in sympathy with the largest truth, and anchored in the generous faith, of liberal Christianity. It was our privilege to see the rare gentleness and controlled cheerfulness of his spirit under recent heavy trial that yet sapped his life ; and it was the happy end of a burdened yet never gloomy way, when sitting a few weeks ago, conversing genially in the summer twilight, and looking out upon the lights of the harbor, he suddenly caught glimpses of the light, and entered into the rest of the final haven. A book of remembrance for him written on many hearts holds the lesson of a pure and gentle spirit, an earnest and large-planned life, a loyal and rational faith.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE UNITARIAN PARISHES OF MELROSE
AND MALDEN.

A special meeting of the Unitarian parish of Melrose was held, Mr. J. G. Bowden acting as moderator, when the following resolutions were unanimously adopted : —

Whereas, By the sudden death of our pastor, Rev. Henry Westcott, his brief connection with us, so full of good results to this society, and of happiness to us all individually, and so rich with promise of still greater good in the future, has been unexpectedly terminated,

Resolved, That we wish to place on record our deep sense of his faithfulness in the relations as pastor and friend, as

well as our admiration for his perfect integrity of character, for his thorough devotion to principle, and for the unselfishness with which he made the welfare of those for whom he labored so successfully his chief aim.

Resolved, That, as a preacher, his strong and clear presentation of his views of religious truth, his familiarity with the latest results of modern scholarship, his readiness to consider and discuss candidly new views, and his courage in presenting the truth as it appeared to him, awakened great interest in his hearers, and, we believe, produced a lasting impression for good. Although he has ceased from his labors, the influence of his work and character will remain in the hearts and lives of all who knew him.

Resolved, That we tender our deepest sympathy to the widow and son of our late pastor, thus suddenly deprived of his wise counsel and loving companionship. May the same abiding faith in the goodness of our heavenly Father, and the reality of the immortal life that was so dear to him, cheer and sustain them; and may they receive comfort from the assurance that their sorrow is shared by so many who had learned to honor and love him, and who will ever cherish his memory!

It was also voted that Messrs. J. O. Norris, G. H. Dearborn, and Mrs. J. G. Bowden be a committee to arrange for the placing of a memorial picture of Mr. Westcott upon the chapel walls.

The committee appointed by the Unitarian church of Malden to prepare resolutions upon the death of their pastor, Rev. Henry Westcott, have presented the following:—

Whereas, By the unchanging laws set to govern human life, our pastor and friend, Rev. Henry Westcott, has been taken from us, therefore,

Resolved, That we, as members of this society, and also as having possessed the inestimable gift of his true friendship, do hereby give expression to our sense of a twofold loss: first, the loss coming to a parish that, after many trying vicissitudes, had at length secured the ministrations of an earnest, devoted, hopeful clergyman, whose presence and words were ever calculated to lift us above our anxieties to a higher plane of courage and hope; second, the loss coming only to those who possess the friendship of a man of pure motives, unselfish aims, and spiritually developed character. In our associations with Mr. Westcott outside the church, our reverence for the clergyman ever became merged in our affection for the kindly Christian brother.

Resolved, That, although we deeply feel our loss, we yet would essay to recall the noble example our pastor set in his own season of bereavement and sorrow. As he mourned not as "one without hope," but trusted in the goodness and wisdom of the Father even then, so we would seek to find consolation in the hope and trust the true believer may cherish in the period of his greatest loss.

As members of a body devoted to the inculcation of a devout religious faith, we must and do feel that the withdrawal of the soul from the earthly life to the life beyond, through the phase of death, is not an ill, however hard to be borne by the mortal affections. We should be unfaithful to the exalted teachings of our beloved pastor, could we otherwise regard it.

Resolved, That we present a copy of this brief and inadequate, but not the less feeling and grateful, tribute to the

memory of our pastor, to Mrs. Westcott and her son, with the assurance that the friendly hearts mourning him feel a quick sympathy for them, which they earnestly desire may not be quite devoid of a power to comfort.

ABBIE M. GANNETT.
CHARLOTTE A. JONES.
E. M. SHEPHERD.

At a special meeting of the Roundabout Club, Melrose, at the residence of the president, George H. Dearborn, to take proper notice of the death of Rev. Henry Westcott, a committee comprising Rev. Messrs. C. L. Short, D. P. Livermore, and Mr. Thomas B. Peck offered the following resolutions, which were adopted :—

Whereas, In the course of human events as ordered by a wise and good Providence, our beloved brother, the Rev. Henry Westcott, has suddenly ceased from his earthly labors, therefore,

Resolved, That we, his friends and associates of the Roundabout Club, plainly conscious of the bereavement we have sustained in his loss, rejoice in the memory of the unsullied life he lived among us, — a life of fidelity to duty, of helpfulness to man, and of loyalty to God.

Resolved, That we feel that during his brief sojourn among us he was always interested in the work of the club, and we remember the excellent essay he recently read before it. That our sorrow for his loss from us is mitigated by the conviction that he still lives, having only passed to a higher plane of being, where he is promoted to the holding of grander trusts and to the discharge of nobler duties.

Resolved, That we tender our heartfelt sympathy to the afflicted family whose home can never recover the light it has lost, and in which there must henceforth remain a vacancy. But we must believe that when the good and true leave us, they often become the wiser guides, the tenderer friends, the mightier helpers, and so we pray it may be with them.

Resolved, That these resolutions be entered upon the personal record of the club, and a copy of the same, duly attested by the president and secretary, be forwarded to the family of Mr. Westcott.

It was also voted that Mr. John O. Norris be requested to write a sketch of Mr. Westcott's life, to be read at a future meeting of the club.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE CAMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION OF
MINISTERS.

The Association of Ministers, in and about Cambridge, desires to put on record the sense of its loss in the death of Rev. Henry Westcott, a faithful member, and for several years its efficient secretary.

As his brethren in the ministry, we wish to bear testimony to the earnest, conscientious, religious character of brother Westcott, to his patient resignation under bodily weakness, to the resolute will with which he gave himself to his chosen work, and to the frankness and courage with which he uttered his convictions of truth.

And we tender to his family our sympathy in their sorrow, in the trust that he has entered upon the life immortal in which he so strongly hoped and believed.

HENRY H. BARBER,
H. C. DeLONG,
Committee.

**COMMEMORATIVE SERVICES AT THE CHURCH, AFTER THE
SUMMER VACATION.**

The Unitarian church held its first service after the summer vacation, on Sunday morning, Sept. 9, and it was very largely attended. During the vacation the walls of the church had been tinted and frescoed, and a very fine organ, made by Hook & Hastings, placed in the church. The pastor, Rev. Henry Westcott, having died during the vacation, the service on this occasion was of a special memorial nature, and was conducted by Rev. B. H. Bailey of Marblehead, a former classmate of the deceased. A large crayon portrait of Mr. Westcott, drawn by Mr. Wallace Bryant, was placed upon the pulpit platform, and decorated with flowers,—the latter also gracing the pulpit. The musical and Scripture selections were in consonance with the occasion, and allusion was made in the prayer to the deep sorrow which shadowed the re-union of this people. The sermon was preached from the text, "For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. (Luke xx. 38.) In the sphere of the senses, the speaker said, every thing suggested that life rather than death was the prime thought of the universe. Nature teaches life, and all her various manifestations: the springing of the grass, the song of birds, the tender care of the brute creation for their young,—all taught the same lesson;

and this was emphasized in the life of man. Man lives to labor, and labor and life are synonymous ; and the works of man's hands testify to the life whose activities never cease. In the truest sense is this idea of life, constant here and elsewhere, presented when, ascending higher, the mind and spirit of man are considered. Especially is this truth enforced in the life and so-called death of a true and good man, as was he whose loss this parish was so deeply deploring to-day. The life he lived here was but a mere recognition of that he should live hereafter. This was but the negative side, that should be the positive. Mr. Bailey said : The memory of that pure life, that noble consecration to duty, that sweet smile, those earnest words, were still so fresh in the hearts of all the people who so dearly loved him whose portraiture was the only visible presence in that church to-day, that he would not attempt to revive any recollections of that devoted man who still lives in the best and truest sense beyond. In the resurrection taught by Christ, whose faithful follower he ever was, their departed pastor had always a most abiding faith ; and that faith he taught and lived. And so his ministry to-day and hereafter will be of that benefit to his people which it was his purpose always it should be, as they recall all his sweet and tender counsels, and the beautiful example of his life, and are led by these dear and sacred memories to themselves live the grand and true lives which are but the types of those hereafter. Living thus with the inspira-

tion of such an example to aid and encourage them, the work of their departed pastor would indeed be perfected in them.

In the Sunday school a special service of commemoration was also held, and superintendent J. O. Norris made an appropriate address to the school.



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